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Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

8th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 25 September 2013, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ashe ..... (Antigua and Barbuda)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Touré (Guinea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: The central theme of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly is sustainable development. With its three main pillars this constitutes a comprehensive agenda, even more comprehensive with all of its prerequisites: conflict prevention, bringing peace and security to war-torn countries and bringing perpetrators to justice through the implementation of international law. Helping the weakest to help themselves, shaping economies that pay focused attention to social-agenda and environmental issues and that effectively use e-technologies, protecting human rights and supporting the rule of law and democracy — these are all integral parts of sustainable development.

The report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda notes that Governments bear the primary responsibility for assuring sustainable development and for improving the lives of people in their territories. Sustainability can be truly implemented, however, only if we instil it in the core thinking of Governments, societies, individuals and the international community as a whole.

Let me start with what is clearly and without a doubt the most unsustainable situation in the world at the moment: the conflict in Syria. It has been repeated thousands and thousands of times, and must continue to be repeated over and over again, that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable under any circumstances and requires complete and unreserved condemnation. It is clear that chemical weapons must be destroyed quickly and verifiably. Therefore the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Security Council must — and I emphasize must — move forward and agree on the legally binding terms to resolve that issue, preferably under Chapter VII of the Charter, as soon as possible.

Even without the use of chemical weapons, the military actions and brutality which have occurred in Syria have created suffering and a humanitarian disaster of unimaginable proportions. More than 110,000 people have been killed, and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons are scattered around the

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region. About 7 million Syrians are in urgent need of assistance.

While there is no quick or easy fix to that complex situation, we must keep doing what we can to ease human suffering. Estonia is one of many countries that have been focusing on helping those who have been forced to flee from their homes and protecting the most vulnerable members of society: women and children. I would also like to praise the good work of UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and humanitarian workers in Syria who often by risking their own lives, have been able to organize and deliver assistance.

Evidence collected by the Human Rights Council's Independent International Commission of Inquiry indicates that war crimes, crimes against humanity and gross human rights violations have been systematically committed in Syria. Estonia is among the countries that joined the Swiss initiative in January, asking the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. It is the responsibility of the international community to protect, if a Government fails to do so.

In contrast, let me turn to a country and conflict where hope has been restored recently. That presidential elections in Mali were carried out in a peaceful and transparent manner has paved the way for optimism. The newly elected President has many important tasks ahead, beginning with reconciliation between the southern and northern parts of Mali. I wish Mr. Keita all the luck and energy he will need to rebuild his country, and I can assure him that Estonia stands among the countries that will continue to help if needed.

I venture to say that another country whose future looks promising is Afghanistan. I believe that responsibility and ownership make people masters of their own fate, and I can see the willingness of Afghans to avail themselves of that opportunity. The international community must continue to assist that country in order to ensure that their efforts will bear fruit. As a long-term partner of Afghanistan, Estonia remains committed to assisting with the training and financing of Afghan security forces after 2014, while continuing to support educational progress, women's empowerment, the rule of law and health care.

It is also sadly true that conflicts can at times be alarmingly sustainable. For years, Estonia has emphasized that protracted conflicts around Nagorno Karabakh and in Georgia and Moldova must not fall off the radar screen of the international community. Without the will of all the involved parties, no lasting solutions can be found.

Every year, over half a million people die as a result of illegal or irresponsible arms transfers. Enormous amounts of money and resources are spent on arms, often at the expense of far more vital needs. We view the adoption in June of the Arms Trade Treaty, within the framework of the United Nations, as a historic milestone for the world community.

As a responsible member of the international community, Estonia strongly supports and contributes to the activities of the International Criminal Court and the ad hoc tribunals established by the Security Council. We continue to call for more States to ratify the Rome Statute and the amendments to the Rome Statute relating to the crime of aggression. Universality is key to ensuring that the perpetrators of the worst crimes of concern to the international community are held accountable. Accountability and the prevention of atrocities have been the priorities of Estonia as a current member of the Human Rights Council. In the Council, we also focus on the rights of women and children and on their disproportionate suffering during armed conflict.

The post-2015 sustainable development agenda should transform the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into Sustainable Development Goals. In the meantime, we have learned that the MDGs should have focused more on reaching the poorest and most-excluded groups in society. The main challenge of the post-2015 negotiations will be to formulate and reach global agreement on one concrete and measurable set of development goals that would keep the three dimensions of sustainability in its core and maintain a strong focus on poverty eradication. The targets should leave no one behind and be applicable and achievable in every country.

In many societies, women and girls are the main drivers of development. Not allowing them to fulfil their potential through education, decent job opportunities and essential health services is to disregard the potential of one half of humankind. It is also important to remember that persons with disabilities have been one of the most excluded segments of our societies, although they often have serious difficulties with access to basic social services and decent job opportunities.

Official development assistance will continue to play an important role in the sustainable development of many countries in the future, but it cannot compete with the flow of international private investment nor with domestically mobilized resources. Therefore, synergies between different sources of finance, better policies and strong national ownership are necessary. Nonetheless, the main drivers of sustainable development are inclusive and responsible economic policies. A key enabler of growth is the bold use of modern integrated circuit technology solutions. They promote better governance, access to public services, job creation, transparency, accountability and civil society participation.

That brings me to two issues of worldwide importance: cybersecurity and Internet freedom. The two are intrinsically linked and in no way incompatible. Moreover, they will require a multi-stakeholder model of Internet governance. Freedom of opinion and expression, online or offline, is a cornerstone of every democracy and constitutes a fundamental human right. Last year, the Human Rights Council affirmed that very same principle. I am glad that the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Cyber Issues affirmed that international law is essential in promoting an open, secure and accessible cyberspace.

In our fight against cybercrime, it is essential to raise awareness and to work on prevention by everyone, from private computer users to large critical infrastructure and cloud providers. Raising the awareness of political leaders and national governments is equally important; cybercrime may have serious consequences for national security as well as national wealth. Yet the Council of Europe's 2001 European Cybercrime Treaty — renamed the Convention on Cybercrime because participants are from all over the world, and also known as the Budapest Convention — remains thus far the only legally binding international instrument that addresses cybercrime. Needless to say, the more countries accede to it, the more functional it will become. We find it odd that those countries with the largest sources of cybercrime have not acceded to the Convention, while in other areas they stress the primacy of international law.

The United Nations has had and will continue to have a leading role in making the world sustainable. Yet Governments can do and must do their own fair share. Estonia, for example, proudly continues to support the initiatives of civil society in contributing to sustainable development. Approximately one half of the world's countries have joined our 2008 initiative "Let's Do It!" to make people's environments cleaner and our planet environmentally happier.

Let us remain alert and tuned in to every single detail that prevents us from advancing our common well-being, be it in developed or in developing countries. Let us be united in that common effort.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Martinelli Berrocal (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for my country to congratulate Mr. Ashe upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. He can count on the unconditional support of the delegation of Panama during his tenure. We cannot think of a more appropriate theme for this high-level debate than to focus on "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". The theme invites us to reaffirm our commitment to continuing to work towards an agreement on the new development agenda. The agenda will be available for our people and the planet.

The 13 years that have elapsed since we identified a way to achieve development through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have witnessed the fastest reduction in poverty in the history of mankind. In that connection, we as Panamanians have had great pleasure in carrying out studies indicating that half a billion fewer people now live below the poverty line,

that infant mortality rates have fallen by over 30 per cent, and that deaths owing to malaria have declined by a quarter, among other things.

Panama has presented three national reports on the MDGs. They have demonstrated our country's progress in improving the living conditions of our population and in setting the issue of poverty as a priority on the social agenda and focusing the Government's contribution on achieving clear, concrete and measurable goals to reduce poverty and the inequality gap. We have made notable progress in various areas. That is where we need to redouble our efforts so as to provide Panamanian citizens with a better future and so that all may benefit from a better Panama.

In 2012, along with 17 other countries, Panama received the Americas Award for reducing poverty and hunger. On behalf of the people of Panama, we recently accepted an award from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization for reaching the goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, between 1990 and 2015, by halving the number of people who suffer from hunger and by reducing the prevalence of undernourishment by 50 per cent or more, with respect to the levels in 1990-1992, now below five per cent. We are pleased with the work we have done.

For the first time in history, humankind has the technological, economic and sociopolitical structures to eradicate extreme poverty. With an agenda for development coordinated between the public and private sectors and civil society, we can carry out a meaningful process that makes a difference and reaches everybody. Because of its capacity and scope, the United Nations has played a facilitating role, unlike that of any other organization, in order to coordinate the global conversation about development, and it has a special responsibility to its Member States to provide information, analytical thinking and experience from the field.

In that regard, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for establishing a United Nations task force and in particular for convening the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, whose extraordinary efforts are now giving us more insights into a more productive discussion about what path we should follow. The post-2015 agenda should focus on eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the Earth within a set time frame. Countries have learned much about development. We have realized that development that is not sustainable is simply not development.

The MDGs were silent on conflict and the effect of violence on global development, nor was the impact and importance of institutions that guarantee freedom of expression and the rule of law for development included. The Government of the Republic of Panama believes that we need to integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of development more sustainably. For that we support the efforts resulting from decisions made at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro and the work resulting from the meetings convened for the establishment of the High-level Political Forum.

Global inequality is still prevalent and very much a part of this conversation. Some 1.2 billion people account for only 1 per cent of global consumption. The Republic of Panama has successfully reformed its trade, tax policies and transparency. In the same manner, we have reviewed the regulation of our financial markets and productivity. As a result, we have, as far as possible, charted a successful path towards development. It is clear that now we face even greater challenges, different from the previous ones.

Financing development is not easy, but we have a great capacity and the patterns of productivity are becoming more sustainable and equitable. Panama supports the view that the post-2015 agenda must make sustainable development a cornerstone and not leave anyone behind.

The original promise of the MDGs must be kept. The new route towards development must be transformed from reducing poverty to ending extreme poverty. Furthermore, the fight against inequality must be a substantial part of our development agenda and should be measured by the social inclusion generated from economic growth. The promotion and protection of universal human rights must be an integral part of a post-2015 development agenda.

Similarly, institutions and the rule of law must be evaluated as contributions toward the development of countries. Equally, a sustainable planet is crucial not just for the growth of our peoples, but also for their survival. Finding a solution for global environmental problems should be a priority of the development agenda. That is why we support the integration of sustainable development objectives into the post-2015 agenda.

Panamanians believe that unless we forge a global partnership, nothing we say in this Hall will be effective. We need a new spirit of mutual accountability that supports the post-2015 agenda and the work done by the United Nations towards that end. There is no doubt that the post-2015 agenda will depend on new economic partnerships and financing.

The post-2015 agenda cannot possibly succeed without the active support of the Group of 20 and the institutions of economic cooperation and governance, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. The General Assembly has been given an historic opportunity to promote a platform for global development, with so many leaders present here, together, with only one theme in mind. We believe that effective political leadership emanating from the high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and its forum can give us decisive momentum to make a legitimate change to our post-2015 agenda.

As we ponder the post-2015 development agenda, we cannot set aside the purpose for which this Organization was created, namely, to ensure the maintenance of world peace, through undivided and full respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people on Earth, without any discrimination.

In that regard, we cannot let this moment pass without expressing the deep concern that Panama shares with many members of the Assembly on the grave situation in Syria. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population of Syria. We share the view that such acts constitute a crime against humanity that should be investigated and punished in accordance with the norms of existing international law. We firmly call upon all members of the Security Council to assume their responsibilities to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and international protection of the human rights of the Syrian people.

We are concerned about the escalating violence in the Middle East and the veiled and open threats of the use of nuclear weapons, which infringe on the right of countries and peoples to live in peace in their territories. Our global Organization has the supreme duty to speak forcefully and clearly in support of world peace and the right of humankind to continue living on our planet. In this crucial time for life and survival on Earth, we must not fall into the habit of believing that nothing serious is happening and that life will still go on after the atomic mushroom cloud delivers its final verdict of death to every species on the planet. The number of interested parties in the Middle East with nuclear power and the capacity to introduce and test weapons of mass destruction in a conflict situation is sufficiently large that those of us gathered here cannot afford to ignore what is happening there. This is no time to hide our heads in the sand like ostriches, thinking that we can thereby stave off the danger that threatens us and save our lives. It is rather the moment to firmly demonstrate our collective responsibility to defend world peace and life itself.

I wish to inform the General Assembly that my Government is aware of a request made by the Government of the Republic of Nicaragua to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to extend its continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. Without objecting to the right of the Republic of Nicaragua to make such a request, as stated in paragraph 8 of article 76 of the Convention, my Government wishes to express its strong concern about the fact that the coordinates given in Nicaragua's application constitute an unquestionable infringement on our maritime space and on treaties between the Republic of Panama and its neighbours, resulting in a reduction of our maritime area of 49,892.54 square kilometres.

The serious concern on the part of the people and the Government of Panama is not motivated by Nicaragua's request to extend its continental shelf but rather because, despite the fact that our two countries are connected through friendship, geographic and regional proximity and political and economic integration, we were not consulted before the request was made, so that we could consider all of its possible effects. The Republic of Panama, in accordance with its national Constitution, complies with the standards of international law and has always recognized the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice as one way of achieving the pacific settlement of disputes, as laid out in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations.

In that regard, we should also emphasize that according to article 59 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice, the decisions handed down by the world's highest universal tribunal should neither benefit nor harm third parties. My Government is therefore compelled to categorically reject the Republic of Nicaragua's attempt to delimit its maritime boundaries

in this manner, since it violates existing treaties with the Republic of Panama that we have complied with in good faith, as well as our legitimate maritime rights, recognized and accepted by the international community in that area. In accordance with international law, I will produce all the necessary evidence to correct the Republic of Nicaragua's efforts in this matter. But on the occasion of the current session, officials from both our countries have begun the process of resolving our disagreement, which I hope will soon reach a happy conclusion.

Today I also wish to mention a third issue that is very important to Panama, the case of the merchant vessel *MV Chong Chon Gang*, sailing under the North Korean flag, detained in Panama since mid-July. My country, as a State Member of this international forum, complies with the norms and regulations of its internal bodies, and article 4 of our Constitution requires Panama to comply with the norms of international law. That mandate has governed all of our acts as a nation. The vessel in question was transporting undeclared war materiel from the Republic of Cuba destined for North Korea. Acting on intelligence that we obtained, we detained the vessel before its transit through the Canal on the suspicion that the cargo contained drugs. When the ship was seized, an enormous amount of war materiel — which, by definition and because of its destination, clearly violated Security Council Sanctions Committee mandates — was discovered hidden under 200 tons of raw sugar.

In compliance with the mandates in question, my Government notified a panel of experts and invited them to Panama to verify the findings and confirm our initial impression, as presented by the drugs prosecutor who initiated the investigation under the Republic of Panama's laws. The panel inspected the cargo and later made a preliminary report in accordance with Security Council resolutions. The evidence is now with the Security Council. My Government would like to emphasize the significance of the action it took, not just as a Member State but also in its promotion of respect for the decisions of this body and of the peaceful coexistence of nations. We are talking here about an unprecedented and possibly unique situation, at least on our continent, which is why I stress its importance today. Panama complied with its duty as a Member State, even in the face of possible risks, high material costs and potential consequences to be defined in accordance with Panamanian law, as outlined in Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009) and 2094 (2013).

As President of a sovereign nation, I have not come before this forum to demand action against the countries involved in the incident. Panama simply desires and requests recognition that our conduct was based on our firm wish to comply with the rules that the Organization has laid down. We will respect the results of the investigation, and we wish to make it clear that Panama has no issue with the States involved in the matter, which is why its settlement is not a bilateral one. We Panamanians did our duty, and the United Nations must now also do its duty, at a time when following the rule of law is the only way to solve the delicate international problems that threaten the peaceful and human coexistence of the peoples of the world.

Panama and its people anxiously await just recognition of their act, which we see as an important precedent for our hemisphere. We call on the international community to implement programmes and solutions conducive to peace. Panama reaffirms its historical position that we should use the tools of mediation and dialogue to deal with all current conflicts in the region and to seek solutions that defend and protect the right of peoples to live and work in peace.

Since the end of my term is approaching and this is the last address I will give to the General Assembly, I wish to say that I feel the satisfaction of a task completed as I leave Panama in the place it now occupies in the world. We leave behind a legacy of social and political stability and sustained high economic growth throughout the Latin American region, and we have helped to promote and build the common welfare of the Panamanian nation.

I would like to cite some favourable statistics that illustrate our growth and social welfare, published by entirely credible international entities. On the index of human development for 2012, according to the United Nations, Panama is classified as a country of high human development, scoring 0.780 as compared to the average for Latin America, which is 0.741, and for the world as a whole, which is 0.694. In a country of 3.63 million inhabitants, 1.83 million are men and 1.79 million are women, according to the United Nations *Human Development Report 2013*. On the literacy index, Panama is at 94.1 per cent, also according to the *Human Development Report 2013*. Panama invests 4.6 per cent of its gross national product in public expenditures for culture and health, the highest level in Central America, according to the Genral Treasury of the Republic. Average life expectancy in my country

is 76.3 years, according to the *Human Development Report 2013*.

When it comes to the enjoyment of political rights, we have a rating of 1 according to Freedom House in 2012. Panama's competitive ranking on the 2013 index of the World Economic Forum was forty-eighth out of 148 countries reviewed, and its Fitch investment rating was upgraded from BB+ to BBB, indicating a stable perspective. Our Moody's rating was Baa2, a stable perspective, and according to Standard and Poors we rose from BB+ to BBB, again indicating a stable perspective.

The latest United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report shows Panama as one of the highest ranked Latin American countries for maritime connectivity. According to the 2013 index, Panama improved its score from 42.38 to 44.88, similar to Mexico, which moved from 38.81 to 41.80, while Brazil dropped from 38.53 to 36.88. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean estimates that Paraguay leads Latin American growth with an increase of 12.5 per cent in gross domestic product, followed by Panama, with 7.5 per cent.The International Monetary Fund estimates regional gross domestic product growth in the region as follows for 2013: Paraguay at 11 per cent and Panama at 9 per cent. In sum, Panama is on a firm path to full development, and with the support of the international community we will continue responsibly to meet the challenges that still face us in order to achieve the sustainable development for the well-being of all our citizens.

The year 2013 has been one of great international events for our country. We will soon have the honour for the second time of hosting a Summit of the Americas, the thirteenth, when Heads of State and Government will discuss the Ibero-American community within the new global context as it pertains to the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. In November, we will also host the forthcoming Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which reflects the priority that our country accords to the struggle against corruption as a factor in development. In a similar vein, we will continue to advance projects for the establishment in our country of a regional hub for humanitarian assistance and of a regional centre of the United Nations for Latin America and the Caribbean. That project will serve as our contribution to the international community, with respect both to humanitarian actors and to the United Nations system, and expresses our full support for their efforts on behalf of those most in need.

I am an optimistic man. I believe in human intelligence and in the capacity of our species to recognize errors and dangers in order to change course and ensure our continuity on this planet. Moreover, the nation of men and women of which I am the leader shares the dreams of a world united by its respect for life and by the way it values and loves the vast cultural heritage that has been built by generation upon generation of people. I am convinced that however great the challenges and dangers that lie in wait for us may be, we will know how to meet and overcome them with courage and intelligence. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to mention the great dangers that surround us today. Only through concerted, responsible action will we be able to overcome the difficult hour that faces humankind.

Today, multilateralism itself is being sorely tested. We are facing one of the most serious and decisive moments in the history of the planet and the human race. At this unprecedented moment, the Organization will have to take serious decisions in order to honour its responsibility to our peoples with concrete results. The Governments of the world need to focus their efforts on raising the level of discussion so that our ambitious contract with humankind and our planet can be fulfiled in time. Not to do so in the face of all the destructive forces that exist on the face of the Earth, and to allow the passions that lead peoples and nations to conflict and war to be unleashed, would be to lose one of the last remaining opportunities for humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ricardo Martinelli Berrocal, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ouattara (*spoke in French*): Like the Heads of State and Government who have spoken before me, I would like, on behalf of the delegation of Côte D'Ivoire and on my own behalf, to address my sincere congratulations to Mr. Ashe on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I also wish in particular to thank Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon for his leadership of the Organization and his commitment to world peace and development. I take this opportunity to reiterate to him, in the name of my counterparts in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), our gratitude for his personal involvement in the resolution of conflicts in Africa and especially in the subregion of West Africa.

Before touching on the topic of today's debate, in taking the floor for the second time before the Assembly I would like to reaffirm the gratitude of the Ivorian people for the efforts of the United Nations and the international community on our behalf. Indeed, thanks to that invaluable support, Côte d'Ivoire is now hard at work and has returned to the path of economic and social development for the well-being of all Ivorians. My country is in a period of full reconstruction after establishing credible and democratic institutions following free, transparent elections. National reconciliation and political dialogue are under way in a climate of peace. We are aware of the challenges that remain, but we are on the right path.

The theme for this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", calls on us all individually and collectively to consider our capacity to meet the development challenge. As we approach the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it should be noted that significant progress has been achieved by most countries, and we welcome the determination of all Governments to continue their efforts to meet the Millennium commitments.

Although much remains to be done and the progress made can mask various national and regional realities, the current trend appears to be irreversible, despite a particularly difficult economic environment. We must seek to build on the positive outcomes that have been achieved in a number of areas, such as primary school enrolment, vaccinations and slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS. We must also resolve issues of food security, drought, access to drinking water and combating poverty, which continue to be major concerns for our States.

By adopting the Millennium Development Goals, we have the collective responsibility and ambition to improve the living conditions of our fellow citizens and thereby accelerate the development of our countries. As far as my country, Côte d'Ivoire, is concerned, progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, which was deadlocked because of the sociopolitical crisis, has today gained new momentum, thanks to the sound performance of our economy. It is in that favourable climate that the Government has established an ambitious reconstruction programme, which is based on the national development plan for the period 2012-2015. Social investments being a priority in that programme, the programme allocates substantial amounts to education, health and basic social infrastructure. The Government has also made job creation a national priority, in particular jobs for young people, and its goal is to create 200,000 jobs a year, which is a considerable number given the size of our country.

As we assess what has been accomplished, we must face the fact that the world needs greater solidarity to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, we must adopt a comprehensive approach that will enable our countries to create sustainable development models that are more equitable and more respectful of our differences. The African continent, which lags behind in the effort to achieve the Goals by 2015, can nevertheless count on an increasing share in the global economy because of its growth rate. My country therefore supports the definition of a post-2015 agenda to forge a new consensus regarding a new generation of sustainable development goals, based on the Millennium Development Goals.

The world we seek will not come about unless we meet the challenge of peace and security, as well as that of democracy, through a return to the values of the Charter of the United Nations. Too many wars

and conflicts continue to tear humankind apart, undermining development efforts in numerous countries. We must collectively put an end to that situation by ensuring that we serve the interests of the people exclusively, using the tools we already have. It is by renewing the foundations of our solidarity that we will be able to counter new threats, such as terrorism, cross-border crime, drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking and piracy at sea.

The attack of a rare violence that occurred in our brother country, Kenya, is an example of those threats, and reminds us of the urgent need for collective action against the threat of terrorism. We condemn in the strongest possible terms that despicable and barbarous act, which shows that the fight against terrorism is ongoing and calls for new methods of security. In these times of great suffering, I would like, on behalf of my country and West Africa, to convey to the brotherly people of Kenya and its President our compassion and support.

International governance must become more democratic and increasingly embody the universal consensus and the values of our nations. Indeed, the world must be able to recognize itself in its multilateral institutions in order to effectively deal with the hazards of this new century.

West Africa is aware of the threat posed to its development, the deterioration in the security environment and the proliferation of new factors of instability. Accordingly, the Heads of State of ECOWAS are rightly doing everything possible, with the support of the international community, in a determined effort to re-establish and maintain peace in our region. For that reason, we welcomed with the utmost satisfaction the re-establishment of the territorial integrity of Mali and the successful holding of presidential elections in that country.

That success must not hide the major challenges still facing our region. I therefore call upon the international community to learn from the conflict in Mali and to support ECOWAS and the African Union in implementing a coherent and proactive security policy. Terrorism in the Sahel region is spreading to such an extent that entire expanses are outside the authority of States. The threat goes beyond the borders of the African continent and demands a concerted international response in keeping with the stakes involved.

I would like to encourage donors and our traditional partners to provide their support to the United Nations and to our States within the framework of this strategy. We welcome the announcement of the upcoming visit of the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank to the Sahel region in order to mobilize the entire international community and the financial institutions.

If we want to end the cycle of politico-military crises in West Africa, Guinea-Bissau must also receive international support, so that we can build upon the current inclusive transition and enable the Government to organize democratic elections next November. For that reason, on behalf of ECOWAS, I call upon the international community to contribute to the financing of general elections in that country.

The President took the Chair.

In closing, I would like to remind our Assembly that in order to meet the challenges of international peace and security, we must redouble our efforts to deliver on the commitments made at United Nations conferences and summits. The right to development must become a reality for all, as set out in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which was unanimously adopted in September 2000. We must all draw lessons from the shortcomings of the past in order to rebuild the world gloriously for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Humala Tasso (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, and to welcome the fact that this lofty responsibility has been entrusted to a dear friend from Antigua and Barbuda, a member of our community of Latin American and Caribbean States. You can count on the firm support of Peru in the execution of your work.

At the outset, I wish to express our respect for and solidarity with the people of Mexico and Pakistan, who are suffering as a result of natural disasters. I also wish to express the strong rejection and condemnation of the Government and people of Peru of the terrorist attack in Nairobi. We are relieved that this horrendous attack has come to an end. We express our unwavering solidarity with the families of the victims and with the Government and people of Kenya at this difficult time.

The world is changing, the agenda is realigning, new actors are emerging and new horizons are coming into view for the future of humankind. All countries and peoples are affected by such rapid transformation. However, we note with concern that some fundamental truths have not changed. Wars continue, mostly in new forms, emerging from the shadows and exacting an ever higher price from innocent populations.

Regarding the Syrian tragedy, we express our solidarity with the Syrian people. Peru condemns the use of chemical weapons as unacceptable in all circumstances. It is an affront to humankind and a clear violation of international law. The Syrian people deserve an immediate solution to the bloody conflict ravaging their country. We therefore urge all parties involved to find a peaceful and negotiated solution that respects the mechanisms for the settlement of disputes. We also call on the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

At the same time, inequality is becoming ever more extreme. The gap marginalizing the poor from the benefits of progress and development widens by the day, robbing them of the rights enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

It is crucial for us to strengthen, renew and uphold our global commitment to developing peaceful relations among peoples and to seeking solutions that reject the use of force as means of solving our problems. It is therefore particularly gratifying for Peru and a source of genuine pride that we addressed our maritime delimitation dispute with Chile in the most constructive and cooperative way possible, through a mutual commitment to abiding by and enforcing the judgment to be rendered by the International Court of Justice. This process will, I trust, transform the very nature of our relationship into a profitable and enduring coexistence for the future of our neighbouring peoples.

The rule of law and its principles in the conduct of international affairs are therefore indispensable tools for our conduct as members of the community of peoples of the United Nations. However, the greatest threat to international peace and security falls not in the realm of relations between States, but transcends them and may even use them as tools for shadowy schemes. We are referring to terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, mafias and corruption. All of these crimes pose a genuine threat to life, progress and development, affecting primarily the poorest, which means that such crimes are increasingly becoming the main obstacle to the realization of the goals of the United Nations.

The underlying problems remain the same. Peru therefore welcomes the fundamentally important theme you have chosen, Sir, for our discussions — the development agenda for beyond 2015, which is the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Our country, happily, has made progress and attained some of the best benchmarks for achievement. Since 2000, according to United Nations Development Programme indicators, we achieved certain goals early, in particular in the fight against poverty and extreme poverty, hunger, child mortality, and access to safe drinking water. In 2000, more than half of Peruvians lived in poverty; today, only a quarter of my countrymen still face that situation. Our goal is to reduce those living in poverty to one fifth of our population by the end of my term, in 2016.

We have undertaken to realign the growth model by focusing on inclusion. In those efforts, the State is implementing a number of connected and interdependent policies. It is worth underscoring the unprecedented measure of devoting expenditure to the poorest and most excluded through a range of social programmes aimed at improving the living standards of the population, enhancing education for children and young people and promoting gender equality and access to health services, paying particular attention to those in vulnerable situations.

We are deeply concerned to note that the environment is deteriorating, which is having an impact on our security, in particular that of the most vulnerable. This is happening even as we remain unable to agree on measures to ensure our sustainable development.

The development agenda must also pay particular attention to the empowerment of women and the protection of vulnerable groups. Our Government attaches particular importance to the rights of indigenous peoples. We were the first in the world to legislate and regulate the right to prior consultation on measures directly affecting such groups in accordance with Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization.

We are equally concerned about the rights of migrants and the opportunities for integrated development, to which they contribute, fostering inter-cultural dialogue and economic exchanges between their countries of origin and their host countries. In that vein, we have promoted the free movement of people and welcome the initiative of the Government of Spain to promote visa-free entry for Peruvian nationals into the Schengen Area .

We therefore welcome the commitments contained in the document "The future we want", adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held last year (resolution 66/288, annex). The process proposed at that event to establish sustainable development goals should converge with the post-2015 development agenda, leading to the greater capacity of the Organization to contribute to solving urgent problems and dealing with development challenges.

We urgently need to integrate the various separate efforts. The United Nations should have a single, comprehensive development agenda. But to do so, we need to change the equation and place the fight for equality and against inequality at the centre of our efforts. Let us not make growth an end in itself; rather, we should turn it into a tool. That is why in Peru we believe that the right formula is "inclusion for growth." That is the direction Peru proposes for the post-2015 agenda.

Peru has made a quantum leap in its economy. We are currently among the fastest-growing countries. Responsible management of our economy has helped to create 800,000 new jobs so far during my Administration and has also helped to reduce unemployment by 7 per cent. We are gradually diversifying our economy. Non-traditional exports account for one third of our total exports — more than $11 billion dollars today — and service exports account for $5 billion. We are developing our immense potential for tourism.

The economic growth in recent years has been extraordinary, and I must say it has been the result of much effort, rigour and work, as well as democratic continuity and perseverance. Peru has managed both to avoid the worst effects of global instability and to attract levels of investment flows that are unparalleled in our country's history. Our task is to strengthen the foundations that have enabled such growth, in particular by strengthening democracy, institutions, the rule of law and security, building citizenship and opening spaces for participation.

We have the means to do that, since we are a country of entrepreneurs: 98 per cent of our businesses are small or medium-sized. They employ 75 per cent of the economically active population and contribute 42 per cent of the gross domestic product. Thanks to our efforts, Peru is now considered an emerging, middle-income country, with new middle classes and a growing domestic consumption, and it is able to attract long-term investments for large projects.

Thanks to that and to the extent that we have strengthened our national capacities, we will be able to encourage industrial policies geared towards changing economic and social structures. For us, industrialization is a national goal. In order to move in that direction, in December Lima will host the fifteenth General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Being centrally located on the map of South America and having played a key role in Latin American history, Peru views its region from the perspective of a country that seeks consensus, both internal and external. Peru is a country that perceives regional integration as an effective way to improve the present and future of our security and development. We Peruvians have an overriding conviction that, on our own, we can move forward rapidly, but together we can do that better and reach farther.

Peru is part of the Pacific Alliance, along with Mexico, Chile and Colombia. Together we are moving towards integration with a strategic projection towards the Asia-Pacific region and the world. In that region, which is home to the most dynamic economies of the twenty-first century, we are also part of the Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. We hosted the Leaders' Meeting in 2008 and will host it again in 2016.

We are also a member of the Union of South American Nations, having recently completed our term as pro-tempore president. We participate in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which this year held its first summit with the Heads of State and Government of the European Union. We maintain our hemispheric roots through the Organization of American States, and at the subregional level, we are currently the pro-tempore president of the Andean Community. We consider all those forums to be complementary. We participate in them with a constant call for integration, dialogue and consensus.

Peru is a reliable partner committed to global causes. Our commitment to the values and principles of the General Assembly brings us to point out the need for reform. That is necessary in order to make the United Nations system more legitimate, representative, accountable and effective through the strengthening of its principal organs, specialized agencies and various organizations in the areas of security, development and human rights. Peru shares the position held by a large number of Member States on the need to reform and expand the Security Council so as to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century.

Our aspirations also entail more transparency and accountability on the part of individual economic actors and greater justice in the distribution of wealth. With those objectives in mind, in 2014 Peru will host the thirty-fifth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and in 2016 the fourteenth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We thereby hope to contribute so that the Doha Round can be resumed, in the scope of the World Trade Organization, with better prospects.

In many parts of our Latin America and in Peru, republican States were weak from the start, concentrated in the capital city. Their core problem has been therefore that they have been unable to deal with the entire nation and have focused perhaps on one third of the country. It was impossible to build citizenship, since in practice there were different categories of Peruvians: those who received Government services and those who did not.

Our efforts must be directed at the creation of a twenty-first-century State, a State that serves all, not just a few. While this includes an eminently ethical component, its basis is not restricted to that important dimension. It also has profoundly practical repercussions for society at large. We cannot forget that a State that does not serve the entire population breeds and exacerbates inequality. As long as such degrees of inequality exist – and I will never tire of saying this - any policy aimed at combating poverty will have only relative effects.

For that reason, my Administration has worked not only on economic growth but in all areas of growth. The history of my country has seen other periods of growth, but they proved to be unsustainable and benefited very few. Economic growth is a means and not an end: it is an indispensable tool, but it is not sufficient. Our people, especially those who are most forgotten, cannot wait indefinitely for growth without the State actively promoting the extension of its benefits.

In addition, that will set in motion a virtuous circle in which progress for our most vulnerable countrymen and the development of a population free of extreme poverty, with health care and education for all, will create the conditions for even greater economic growth. That is why we stress the new political concept of simultaneous growth and redistribution. That is what I mean when I stress the necessity of "including so as to grow".

Two years ago, less than two months into my term as President of Peru, I stood before the Assembly to emphasize my Government's commitment to social inclusion. I said then that we were working to turn our economic growth into development and quality of life for my countrymen. I also said that we intended to hone our democracy so that it could solve the problems and meet the needs of all. The country we want is a prosperous one where all the Peruvians, women and men, without any distinction, can enjoy the benefits of growth in a dignified, safe and free manner. After two years in office, I reaffirm what I said; our commitment remains the same.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ruak (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to begin by conveying my vigorous condemnation of the recent terrorist attacks in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq, which killed scores of innocent people. On behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste, I extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved families in connection with the senseless loss of their loved ones. Terrorism is contrary to every civilized value we hold dear and for which we have fought. It must be condemned in all its manifestations, regardless of its motives.

This is the first time that I am addressing this Assembly of representatives of the international community as a whole. I take this occasion to once again thank the United Nations for its contribution to the realization of the right of the people of Timor-Leste to decide on our own future. Timor-Leste's experience shows the great value of the United Nations and the importance of negotiated solutions, dialogue and diplomacy to international disputes.

This is the first year without a United Nations mission in the country since the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence 11 years ago. Our partnership with the United Nations throughout the last decade achieved remarkable successes. The Timorese people's yearning for stability and peace was decisive for the new circumstances, which allowed the Security Council to remove Timor-Leste from its agenda.

The results obtained are shared jointly by the international community, through their solidarity and pioneering efforts in the nation-building processes made in Timor-Leste, and by the Timorese people, through their maturity and firm determination to live in peace, which has been repeatedly expressed in free elections with a high voter turnout.

I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the attention given to my country, which was again underlined by his visit to Timor-Leste one year ago, which greatly honoured us.

The Timorese people now hold in their own hands full responsibility for building their future. The country is facing the challenges with high hopes and optimism.

One such challenge is to focus national development efforts on diversifying the economy, reducing our dependency on oil and promoting inclusive development for all Timorese people. Another is to consolidate our national institutions, strengthening their technical capacities and ensuring the participation of the younger generation in managing the country.

The older generations have incumbency and have the duty to pass on to young people the wealth of values developed during the liberation struggle, such as respect for human dignity and dedication and service to the country. Those values are as necessary to building an equitable society and a unified country today as they were in the past to solidifying the unity of purpose of the nation. The development of the country must not exclude any Timorese.

The relations between Timor-Leste and the United Nations will continue to strengthen and will increasingly focus on assistance in the area of human, social and economic development efforts and the strengthening of institutions.

The international integration of the country continues to evolve at a good pace, guided by the goal of contributing to a peaceful and stable international system capable of promoting social and human opportunities for all peoples. We are participating actively in the development of new forms of dialogue among fragile States by establishing the Group of Seven Plus (g7+). That group, over which Timor-Leste currently has the honour of presiding, comprises 18 countries committed to promoting a new model of engagement between fragile States and other international stakeholders. The New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, promoted by the g7+, has been well received by the United Nations, development partners and international organizations. The initiatives of the g7+ and the dynamic relationship of the group with development partners contributes

to the establishment of more innovative and effective international relations and cooperation.

The latest report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) states that most countries will not achieve all the MDGs, and that is particularly true in the case of fragile and conflict-affected States. The international community as a whole must draw lessons from that as we plan for the future. Many of the world's poorest have been left behind, including around 1.5 billion people across the globe who live in areas affected by fragility and conflict. That is why the g7+ countries came together with the following vital message: without peace there can be no development and without development there can be no peace. And to add a further dimension to that, there can be neither peace nor development without inclusive and responsive State institutions that are capable of being responsive and attending to people's needs.

At the regional level, we have established friendly relations with neighbouring countries in South-East Asia and the Pacific, in particular with Australia and Indonesia, our closest neighbours, with whom we maintain intense cooperation. The process of reconciliation between Timor-Leste and Indonesia and the excellent relations that our two countries have developed represent a model whose lessons are useful and relevant beyond our borders and outside our region.

Timor-Leste has submitted its application for membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We have developed friendly relations with all member States of that organization, which makes relevant contributions to stability in our region. Our country is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and a special observer at the Pacific Islands Forum. We play an active role in and are committed to multilateral processes, which are important for regional stability and security.

The unanimous election of Timor-Leste to chair the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific by the countries members of that United Nations body reflects my country's harmonious international integration. As a member of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, we will have the honour of chairing that organization in the period 2014-2016. Timor-Leste believes in making its voice directly heard in every multilateral forum of relevance to our national interest and will submit an application for membership in the Commonwealth of Nations.

Turning our attention to international matters whose urgency especially appeals to our conscience, my country has witnessed with horror the growing violence in Syria. We welcome the agreement that was reached to put Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons under United Nations control prior to its destruction. Timor-Leste rejects the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances. We are in favour of dialogue in the search for negotiated solutions, with the involvement of the United Nations. Only negotiation can help save lives and alleviate the high toll that the Syrian people are paying in human lives and social upheaval, which has resulted in millions of internally displaced persons and refugees.

In Timor-Leste, we know only too well the losses and traumas of war. We are committed to preventing violence in all its forms. Earlier this month, our Prime Minister, Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, joined the Champions initiative to end sexual violence in conflict, supporting the corresponding action launched by the United Nations.

In a world undergoing a rapid transition towards globalization, the Security Council must upgrade its ability to effectively respond and must adjust its composition to better reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. New Powers, including India, Indonesia and Brazil, among others, must be granted permanent member status in the Security Council. At the same time, my country is aware of the need for a better representation of medium-sized and small countries with relevant contributions to stability and peace. In that spirit, Timor-Leste supports New Zealand's candidacy for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council for the 2015-2016 term. New Zealand has actively worked with us for peace and security in Timor-Leste, and we believe it will both enhance the representation of small States and be a constructive bridge-builder at the Council.

On 30 August, Timor-Leste celebrated the fourteenth anniversary of the referendum supervised by the United Nations that allowed the Timorese people to realize their right to self-determination and independence. In contrast, there are peoples who, after decades, continue to patiently wait for the realization of that right. Such is the case of the Sahrawi people. A stable and lasting solution for Western Sahara cannot exist without the democratic expression of the will of its people.

We commend the decision of the leaders of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume direct talks under the auspices of the United States Government. Timor-Leste supports the right of the peoples of Palestine and Israel to live side by side in peace, with dignity and in safety. We hope that the peace talks already initiated may at last lead to a solution with two sovereign States coexisting in an environment of mutual respect and rejecting extremism and violence. We condemn the building of settlements in the occupied territories and all unilateral initiatives contrary to resolutions of the United Nations.

We believe in dialogue, openness and inclusion as a means of strengthening confidence in international relations. Therefore, we call for an end to the embargo against the Republic of Cuba, an embargo that does not take into account the reality of today, of the country or of the Cuban people. We also call on President Barack Obama to act in accordance with his powers and release the four Cuban citizens, from an initial group of five, who have been incarcerated for over a decade in North American prisons.

Allow me now to address the situation in Guinea-Bissau, a sister nation to Timor-Leste in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries currently experiencing an easing of political and social tensions, which we hope will lead to the re-establishment of institutional normalcy and democracy. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, which were led by my predecessor as Head of State of Timor-Leste, Mr. José Manuel Ramos-Horta. His initiatives have helped to enhance the prestige of the United Nations among the people of Guinea-Bissau and to create an environment of greater trust and dialogue in the country. The problems of Guinea-Bissau can be solved. Timor-Leste will continue to support the patient efforts of the Guinean people and the international community aimed at intensifying dialogue and reconciliation among the people of Guinea-Bissau and promoting a democratic solution within an appropriate time frame.

Among the critical global challenges facing humankind today, I want to highlight the severity of malnutrition, which affects hundreds of millions of people worldwide. The dual challenges of improving food security and reducing malnutrition on a global scale require a renewed boost from all of us, including development partner countries. Without new coordinated initiatives and greater investment to promote improving food security and the fight against malnutrition, it will not be possible to make rapid and sure progress towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The new objectives are defined in the post-2015 development agenda, due to be launched by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Timor-Leste is following, with great interest, the post-2015 development agenda process and was honoured by the invitation to Dr. Emilia Pires, our Minister of Finance, to participate in the High-level Panel that drafted a proposal for the agenda, following a request by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The past experience of the Timorese people and the country's liberation struggle, in which we were engaged for 24 years, have demonstrated that only tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect, which the Timorese resistance consistently showed and I have consistently supported — in short, veneration for the dignity of people — will allow us to reach durable solutions to disputes between countries.

In a world where challenges are rapidly becoming globalized, requiring concerted and effective responses, the actions of the United Nations are more than ever essential for the stability of international relations. Timor-Leste will continue to show its commitment to the United Nations, so that the Organization may better respond to the desires of Member States and the challenges they face, and to unhesitatingly assert the values of peace and mutual respect. I wish the Assembly the best of luck in its work.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Taur Matan Ruak, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His

Excellency Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Sall (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Senegalese delegation, I would like to wish you, Sir, all the best as President at the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

By focusing its debate on the post-2015 development agenda, the General Assembly reminds us that there is not much time left before attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is finally evaluated. Despite progress after more than a decade of implementing the MDGs, the magnitude of the challenges is still overwhelming. In terms of access to food, housing, education and healthcare, the daily lives of nearly one billion people have barely improved. Women continue to die in childbirth. Inequalities persist within and between countries. The economic crisis continues and environmental degradation is worsening. We need to take concrete and resolute actions to transform our collective ambitions into reality.

In the quest for sustainable development, a conference on climate change in 2015 in Paris will provides us with another opportunity to pull ourselves together, by reversing the negative effects of climate change on Earth, our common habitat.

Addressing the challenges of sustainable development and building the future we want, in the spirit of the Rio+20 Conference, require a more sustained effort than the fight against poverty. We should invest more in education, as the Global Partnership for Education expects of us. We need to modernize agriculture, make electricity accessible to everybody and develop infrastructure to foster trade and investment. These are the pillars that underpin growth and prosperity. It is precisely this vision that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seeks to promote through its Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

As part of that programme, 51 priority projects have been identified and established throughout the continent. Overall, they will cost $68 billion between 2012 and 2020. As Chairperson of NEPAD's Orientation Committee, I am pleased with the consensus that our partners have built around PIDA, namely, the Group of Twenty and the Group of Eight (G-8) and with Brazil, Russia, India and China.

I also welcome the very strong signal which the G-8, meeting in June in Lough Erne, sent concerning the need for a concerted campaign against tax evasion and other fraudulent practices affecting our economies. We must now push ahead and launch the mechanisms we have agreed on for improving transparency in international transactions, including the mining industry. This is the best way to support Africa's efforts to mobilize domestic resources in order to finance its development.

Similarly, Senegal calls for the reform of international economic and financial governance, notably the terms for accessing credit and obtaining financing for economic and social development projects. Let us not pave the road to the future with the instruments of the past. While plummeting official development assistance no longer meets Africa's needs, the trend towards progress should lead us to explore other innovative financing mechanisms available to our countries. Africa is no longer a zone of turmoil and humanitarian emergencies. Africa has become an emerging centre of opportunities and investments for innovative and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Mr. Maelanga (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The world has changed; Africa has also changed. Let us therefore change our paradigms and visions; let us change the way we look at the continent.

Change is also needed for the reform of the Security Council. The Council's legitimacy is not derived only from its status as the guarantor of the collective security system; it is also and especially derived from the representativeness that justifies its action in the name of and on behalf of all Member States.

This time last year, Mali was doubly affected by a coup and a terrorist attack reminiscent of a bygone age. They were a source of great concern for us. Senegal, which remains active within United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, welcomes the restoration of the territorial integrity and constitutional legality of Mali. We congratulate the people of Mali and their political leaders for that happy outcome. We strongly support the national reconciliation efforts being made by the Government in the spirit of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement.

Today, while the armed groups have been defeated, the terrorist threat to the Sahel has not yet been definitively ended. It is only through ongoing, coordinated and sufficiently deterrent action that we

will be able to address the emerging security challenges on the African continent. It is urgent to make operational the African rapid response force, proposed at the last African Union summit.

In Guinea-Bissau, Senegal is supporting the Government's efforts to successfully carry out the electoral process. We urge our partner countries and institutions to pursue their support for the definitive resolution of the Guinea-Bissau crisis through the country's economic recovery, the crucial reform of the defence and security sector, and the fight against illicit drug trafficking. We hope that similar attention will be paid to the Central African Republic and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the legitimate aspiration to peace, stability and the preservation of territorial integrity. Throughout Africa, we are committed to upholding respect for the African Union principles against anti-constitutional changes of Government, regardless of the process used.

In regard to the Middle East, Senegal expresses its deep concern over the untold suffering of the Syrian population. We urge the Syrian Government to exercise restraint and to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention in the control and destruction of its arsenal of chemical weapons.

In its capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Senegal is following the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. It is a courageous and responsible act because it translates the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living within secure and internationally recognized borders. We therefore call for a halt to acts likely to affect that perspective, notably the ongoing establishment of settlements on Palestinian land by the Israeli Government.

On 24 September, Senegal joined other countries in launching the international campaign for the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict. Sexual violence in conflict is an act of unbearable cruelty for the victims and their families. It is a war crime and a serious violation of human dignity and universal conscience. In the name of our common humanity, it is time to act to prevent and stop such horrors. It is time to act so that victims will no longer feel alone in their suffering, which destroys the very foundations of society. It is time to act so that the perpetrators and their accomplices in those crimes are tracked down everywhere, prosecuted and punished in a manner commensurate with the atrocities of their crimes.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kabila Kabange (*spoke in French*): When the nations of the world come together in the General Assembly to consider the major issues facing humankind, it is an honour and a privilege to take the floor and to express the viewpoint of one's country. Animated by those twin sentiments, on behalf of the Congolese people I address the Assembly and through it the community of nations as a whole.

At the outset, I wish to express my most sincere congratulations to Mr. John Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at the sixty-eighth session. I also congratulate the members of his Bureau. I further wish to hail his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for the outststanding way in which he fulfilled his term as President. I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for all his initiatives for peace and security throughout the world and for his personal involvement in seeking ways and means to bring peace and stability to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire Great Lakes region. His efforts are all the more commendable given the fact that the enemies of peace are always on the lookout, ready to strike anyone, anytime and anywhere, as we have unfortunately been recently reminded by the terrorist attack that brought such tragedy to the Republic of Kenya. On behalf of the Congolese Government and people and on my own

behalf, I condemn that despicable act. We express our condolences and solidarity with the brotherly people and leaders of Kenya.

We welcome the President's choice of theme for this general debate, namely, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". He mentioned the equally relevant need to draw lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, consider new and emerging development challenges, create measurable indicators, establish new types of partnership and better integrate the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. The importance of the theme chosen and the relevance of the indicators that accompany it are undeniable. Our thinking must be even more rigorous, as we witness several troubling elements in the international environment.

With respect to organizing for the post-2015 period, the international community is increasingly witnessing non-compliance on the part of certain Members with the basic principles of international relations, persistent selfishness on the part of States and convulsions in the global economy. The consequences are manifold. They range from threats to peace to deadly conflicts and from globalization driven mainly by the unbridled pursuit of profit to the aggravation of poverty. That comes in addition to the food crisis, famines, diseases — including endemic diseases that had once disappeared and are now reappearing — and environmental destruction, which is the main cause of climate change and its deplorable effects.

To remedy the situation, the General Assembly has established several bodies, and I welcome their creation: the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing and the high-level political forum to promote the implementation of recommendations and decisions on sustainable development. My hope is that that process will be consistent with the ongoing transformation of the Economic and Social Council and, beyond that, of the entire United Nations system, in order to better integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the economic, social and environmental dimensions, in the new post-2015 agenda.

The new programme that we are called upon to create must be universal, ambitious and able to meet the huge challenges facing humankind. It must bring about positive change, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. In that respect, it is important to utilize the contribution of women, youth and civil society in both the design and the execution of the agenda. We should also draw lessons from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

With regard to climate change as an important issue to resolve in the post-2015 period, allow me to recall that, under the final document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288), States pledged to abandon unsustainable long-term patterns of consumption and adopt sustainable ways of managing natural resources as the basis for economic and social development and the very future of humankind. Climate change is a threat to humankind and fundamental human rights, particularly for vulnerable populations and especially those from the African continent and island countries. Seeking to limit its impact is, for each of our countries, a responsibility that we must shoulder as a duty towards our people, a service to the human race and an act of international solidarity.

Recognizing that fact, the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country of exceptional biodiversity, has always sought to manage its natural resources with a view to the future. The management policy for of our forest ecosystems is aimed at that. The Grand Inga project has also been designed along those lines. We should emphasize, in fact, that that project should eventually enable us to produce enough electricity to meet the energy needs of nearly half of Africa. It will also be clean and renewable energy, consistent with the requirements of sustainable development.

Today we must begin to set the stage for the post-2015 period. In that context, I express the hope that proposals will be made during this session to translate into reality our common desire to promote the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Such proposals should cover our local, national and regional development programmes. They should also encourage bold international cooperation and reflect the will of each of our States to contribute to international peace and security.

Without peace, no progress is possible. Without the minimum conditions for the safety of persons and property, all development is hypothetical. That is all the more unacceptable since a breach of the peace is the result of aggression. That is the sad recent history of my country.

It is also important to remember other parallel truths that are often overlooked or hidden. Because we acted in solidarity by welcoming Rwandan refugees to our territory, the Congolese population in the eastern part of the country has been deprived of peace — a fundamental right of all persons — and they continue to count their dead. The most recent episode of the unending tragedy occurred when bombs crushed the women and children of Goma last July. It was truly a tragedy unequalled in history and which cannot leave any heart untouched. It is time to ask ourselves what will remain of international humanitarian law if welcoming refugees in distress, which is a humanitarian act par excellence, becomes sufficient reason to justify the eruption of war.

The recent bombing of Goma was all the more reprehensible as it was perpetrated while the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was in the process of implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework of Addis Ababa, including talks with the armed group responsible for the bombings. Nevertheless, I wish to reaffirm my country's determination to comply with all of the commitments contained in the Framework agreement.

From that perspective, my Government has already undertaken the following definitive actions: the establishment of the National Follow-up Mechanism to implement the commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the acceleration of security sector reform, especially the army, police and justice sectors; further progress in decentralization, by adopting the necessary implementation laws; the reform of public finance management; and the restructuring of the Independent National Election Commission. This last was immediately implemented in order to prioritize the organization of local, municipal, provincial, senatorial and provincial governor elections. A national dialogue has been organized, starting on 7 September, with the goal of seeking national cohesion to better respond to all of the challenges facing the country.

Beyond those efforts on the part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the dawn of sustainable peace in the region depends on two main conditions — ending impunity in all its aspects, and the diligent execution of their commitments by the other signatories of the Framework agreement. Therefore, my country again urgently appeals to the Organization to deal with all Member States with equal rigour and to require that each one strictly respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is clear that denouncing violations of those principles is a good thing, but punishing those who violate the principles is preferable by far, especially when those violations are ongoing and recurrent.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my thanks to the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the European Union for their essential role in maintaining peace in our region. I also thank the United Nations, in particular the members of the Security Council, and all of those States that have, for many years, remained at our side in order to ensure peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are all the more thankful to them, as they have participated in one of the breakthroughs of the post-2015 development agenda aimed at ensuring a better world for all.

We must be convinced that beyond our differences lies a common future. Our diversity must be seen as the essential source of wealth that it is. It is high time that we, the international community, find the ways and means to enable millions of people to not simply live, but to live a life of dignity in a world where peace, security and justice are a reality for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajoelina (*spoke in French*): It is often said that things always come in threes. Indeed, this is

the third time that I have had the privilege to address the Assembly as President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar. Here we are again, convening as we do every year for the General Assembly. All the leaders of the planet meet regularly to debate, exchange views and share their experiences within the framework of a process of consultations that belongs to a long collective march towards peace, security and sustainable planetary development. But each year, new, ever more violent and more lethal conflicts are waged, requiring that we respond with equal intensity. Shall we limit ourselves to simply speaking about conflict resolution, or shall we to challenge ourselves, analyse the underlying causes and take the necessary measures to preserve stability in the world?

As I add my voice to those who have spoken before me, I warmly congratulate the President on the votes that he won in support of his candidacy. Madagascar will endeavour to provide him its sincere support and cooperation.

Regrettably, over recent decades, when we speak of Africa, we generally see States that are exposed to permanent violence and the progressive loss of democracy, States where wars, conflicts and crises continually break out and there is more division than consensus. According to Ambassador Jeremić, who presided at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, humankind is facing an existential crisis, with symptoms such as economic instability, social inequalities and environmental degradation.

For my part, I would add that humankind may be losing its forward momentum but that it is not giving up. Yes, the news delivered by the media every day is extremely worrying throughout the world. Whether the country is developed, emerging or poor, no segment of society escapes deterioration of various kinds, including poor employment conditions, unemployment, declining purchasing power, the total absence of any income at all, lack of access to basic necessities in food, clothing, health care and education, and, in addition, poverty, deprivation and indigence. Those are all factors that are the nurturing ground for intolerance, confrontation and conflict, thereby helping to give rise to global insecurity. I refer here particularly to recent events in Kenya, Iraq, Pakistan and Syria, to name just a few. We fully share in the pain and sorrow of the families of the victims.

Some 800 days from the deadline of 2015, like most African States and many developing countries, Madagascar is finding it difficult to attain all the Millennium Development Goals, despite the efforts everyone has made. Given that situation, I have to wonder what sort of contribution we, the leaders of our nations, can make individually to that collective effort, with a view to finding ways of improving the daily lives of those who have put their trust in us and placed their destiny in our hands.

In his statement yesterday (see A/68/PV.5), Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the fact that, in streets and squares across the world, people are pressing those in power. They want world leaders to listen. They want to know that we are doing everything we can to secure a life of dignity for all. The popular unrest in the context of the Arab Spring and the movements of the outraged exemplify this observation and reflect a legitimate aspiration. I fully support the Secretary-General's remarks and call upon all of us to ensure that we clearly understand the demands of the demonstrators.

Madagascar would also have wished to benefit from such understanding when the Malagasy people rose up against an unpopular regime to demand a better life through the establishment of genuine change. But that was not the case. On the contrary, Madagascar encountered misunderstanding and the inflexibility of an international community operating at various speeds, not to mention the application of dogmatic texts, even though popular uprisings elsewhere, in very similar circumstances, had been viewed sympathetically and with concern.

Efforts must therefore now be made to end the unequal treatment of countries in crisis. We must become aware of popular aspirations and realities on the ground so as not to take the wrong decision. If it is valid elsewhere, surely it is also valid in the case of Madagascar?

All the conditions were in place in Madagascar. The danger of a social explosion and a fratricidal conflict was omnipresent, but fortunately — unlike some countries that continue to experience unrest and even armed violence, and despite all the economic and social restrictions and the absence of support and assistance from the international community from which Madagascar has suffered in recent years — the people of Madagascar did not fall into the trap of internal conflict, which some would have taken advantage of.

It is with great national pride that I announce from this rostrum that Madagascar was able to avoid civil war. That required considerable sacrifice, self-denial and humility, but we came through thanks to our patriotism. I reiterate the fact that despite our disagreements and our different points of view, we have reached a settlement of our conflict using all available negotiation methods. I would like to solemnly thank the Malagasy people, who are a peaceful people and aspire to peace and whose courage and patience have been unmatched in the peaceful settlement of our political crisis.

The Malagasy people deserve a better future. Citizens will be able to freely express their choices on their future leader through the ballot box at the upcoming presidential elections, scheduled to take place on 25 October this year, for which the electoral campaign began yesterday.

Madagascar is now starting a new phase in its history. I would like to warmly thank all those who, throughout the process of Madagascar's emergence from its crisis, supported and assisted us during the transition period, in particular, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the various presidents of the SADC Troika, the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the International Organization of la Francophonie, and all friendly countries without exception, without forgetting those who have already demonstrated their willingness to provide international observers for the elections. At the same time, I would like to renew my appeal to the entire General Assembly to join the ranks of our partners.

We are at a crossroads. The people expect specific and tangible results. The question is, do we have the courage and the wisdom to sacrifice ourselves for the well-being of our people and to avoid conflict and civil war, so that innocent people do not lose their lives, so that those who are in power no longer use weapons and so that no one resorts to violence?

As a leader, I realize that the exercise of power requires an awareness of our humanity and our fallibility. That is the message that Madagascar would like convey as its contribution to this general debate today. The world is changing very quickly, a new generation is rising to replace the old one, and leaders have the duty to meet the expectations of our people and to find a solution to ensure their well-being.

In my case, I did everything I could to overcome the political crisis in Madagascar and maintain national unity and the best interests of the Malagasy people. I also decided that I will not be a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections. It is on that note, and with the well-known words of American theologian and writer James Freeman Clarke, that I would like to conclude: "A politician thinks of the next election. A statesman, of the next generation."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andry Nirina Rajoelina, President of the Transition of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Campaoré (*spoke in French*): Sociopolitical crises, armed conflicts, the degradation of ecosystems, pandemics like HIV/AIDS, religious extremism, terrorism, cross-border crime and development problems are today the vital questions that call upon the conscience of individuals, summoning their responsibility for building the present and the future. I am convinced of the need to enhance our spirit of sharing and solidarity in order to meet the challenges of promoting peace, stability and security and to provide humankind with all the tools needed for better mastery of its evolution.

Before continuing, I would like to congratulate the President on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. In addition, I would like to express our recognition for the remarkable way in which his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, presided over the work of the sixty-seventh session. Allow me also to repeat to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban

Ki-moon, the expression of the esteem and recognition of the Government of Burkina Faso for his availability and staunch commitment to peace and development.

The current session is taking place in an international context characterized by relentless economic difficulties and growing threats to peace and security on a global scale. I take this opportunity to express to the people of Kenya the compassion and solidarity of the people of Burkina Faso following the terrorist attacks that were recently perpetrated in Nairobi.

The West African subregion continues to be marked by the stigma of multidimensional crises that have taken place over the past two decades. Our subregion, and particularly the Sahelo-Saharan zone, has became a hideout for drug traffickers and terrorists whose desire to destabilize the region represents a real threat to the peace and security of our States.

I would like to welcome the gradual improvement of the situation in Mali since the deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the holding of presidential elections, which supports the re-established constitutional order. I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate my thanks to all those players who have helped to resolve the crisis in Mali. To the Malian authorities and people, I express my warmest congratulations on the success of the recent presidential elections. The implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel will contribute, I am convinced, to enhancing stability in that country and in the entire Sahelo-Saharan region. Burkina Faso is determined to play a role alongside the international community to achieve the objectives of that strategy.

Dialogue is the favoured way to ensure understanding among and within peoples. Furthermore, the Government of Burkina Faso supports strengthening social cohesion, broadening spaces for freedom and dialogue, and seeking together solutions to conflicts. It is in that spirit that my country has been participating for two decades in peacekeeping operations conducted by the United Nations, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, with contingents of about 2,009 men and women who are deployed in various theatres of operation. I pay tribute to the efforts of all those who work tirelessly to build a world of peace and freedom.

Beyond the resolution of sociopolitical and military crises in West Africa, Burkina Faso strongly supports the initiatives of the international community that seek to restore lasting stability in the Central African Republic, the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region, Somalia and the Sudan.

With regard to Western Sahara, my country supports the search for a political solution acceptable to all parties and reaffirms its support to the Moroccan initiative for an autonomous status for the Saharan region as a credible and realistic alternative in resolving that dispute.

Beyond the African continent, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic urgently requires an immediate end to the hostilities and a search for political solutions to the crisis. Therefore we encourage the implementation of the American-Russian agreement of 14 September aimed at control and dismantlement of chemical weapons stockpiles.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, we welcome the relaunching of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine and strongly encourage the different parties to work towards a peaceful solution to the conflict in order to reach a fair and equitable solution based on the recognition of a Palestinian State living in perfect harmony with Israel.

The climate of dialogue and détente that characterizes relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China should be welcomed and encouraged. In that spirit, we must welcome the Republic of China on Taiwan in the United Nations specialized agencies, particularly the International Civil Aviation Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We also welcome Taiwan's incalculable contribution in support of the achievement by developing countries such as Burkina Faso of the Millennium Development Goals.

Peace in Africa requires pertinant socioeconomic development programmes to generate effective responses to the uncertainties created by the international economic situation and to strengthen trust between the people and the leaders. A landlocked country of the Sahel without great natural resources, Burkina Faso is committed to implementing strong policies in the context of its Strategy of Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development, with a view to

promoting development and to significantly improving in the quality of life of the people of Burkina Faso.

As we approach the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the theme of the current session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", raises in a pertinant way the issue of the dialectical relationship between development, peace and security. It therefore offers us an opportunity to focus our thinking on a new vision in order to achieve comprehensive progress, based on strong international solidarity, towards sustainable development. That is why it is important that we redouble our efforts to regulate environmental issues on the basis of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex), held in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.

Peace and stability appear as still-distant goals, given the number of centres of conflict throughout the world. That situation demands that we further strengthen multilateralism, rigorously apply the principles enshrined in the Charter of our Organization, strengthen the instruments for promoting those ideals and carry out the reform of United Nations bodies, in particular the Security Council. It is my hope that the General Assembly's work at this session will contribute to achieving those noble objectives for a more fulfilled and united humankind.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dessalegn (Ethiopia): It is with great pleasure that I congratulate the President on his election to his high office to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, which is being held under the theme: "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". I wish to assure the President of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the successful discharge of his heavy responsibilities. I would also like to commend his predecessor for the able leadership he demonstrated during the previous session.

Let me begin by condemning the terrorist attacks in Kenya that claimed the lives of innocent civilians and left many more injured. I wish to express my heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Kenya, as well as to the families of the victims of that callous attack. That incident once again demonstrates the need for us to renew our commitment to fight terrorism and extremism in all its forms and manifestations.

I am addressing the Assembly today not only on behalf of my country but also as the representative of the African Union (AU), which Ethiopia has the honour of chairing this year. It is a welcome coincidence that Ethiopia, which played host to the founding Conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), 50 years ago, has assumed the rotating chairpersonship of that premier continental organization at a time when its golden jubilee is being celebrated. We were very pleased to host the Special Summit of African Heads of State and Government, which marked the OAU/AU jubilee on 25 May, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who sent delegations to Addis Ababa to take part in the celebration and conveyed messages of support and solidarity to the African Union. Since the fiftieth anniversary will be a year-long event, we would like to continue to mark the historic milestone during this session of the General Assembly by reflecting on the relations between the United Nations and the then Organization of African Union and today's African Union over the past half-century.

When the Charter of the United Nations was signed in 1945, much of Africa was under the yoke of colonialism. Since then, our continent has been liberated from the remnants of colonialism and other forms of subjugation. Today, it is gratifying to note

that African countries constitute one of the largest groups in the General Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound appreciation for the invaluable contribution of the United Nations to the decolonization process. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that not all the challenges we faced in that struggle have been definitively settled; nor can we say that the process of decolonization has come to an end in all its forms. We should therefore renew our commitment to completing the decolonization process in Africa.

In accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, the United Nations has indeed worked closely with the African Union and other regional mechanisms to advance its primary objectives. Over the past five decades and more, cooperation and partnership between the OAU/AU and the United Nations have significantly expanded and deepened in a wide range of aspects and fields. We acknowledge with deep respect the meaningful cooperation that the United Nations has provided to the then OAU and now to the African Union in addressing our continent's multifaceted challenges.

Despite that fact, we are also cognizant of the fact that a lot remains to be done to further enhance the cooperation and partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of the changing dynamics within Africa and in the world at large. I earnestly hope that this historic occasion will afford us a unique opportunity to reflect seriously on our challenges and shortcomings with a view to strengthening our cooperation and partnership so as to better respond to the changing environment. I believe we should adopt a flexible and innovative approach in implementing Chapter VIII of the Charter in order to enhance our partnership and address our common challenges.

We are celebrating the OAU/AU's golden jubilee at a time when the stereotypical narrative of Africa as a continent afflicted by poverty, disease and conflict has slowly begun to change. In spite of so many persistent difficulties, Africa has indeed turned the corner in reducing the number of conflicts plaguing the continent and in promoting democratic governance, as well as in fighting poverty through accelerated economic growth and development. With its enhanced peace and stability, rapid economic growth, natural resources and growing middle class, Africa is definitely on the rise, and that is attracting much attention from the rest of the world. The twenty-first century will be an African one if we do indeed harmonize our efforts to maintain — in fact, speed up — the rapid economic growth that Africa has been registering for the last decade or so. We have every reason to be optimistic that an African renaissance is around the corner.

That positive development is unquestionably encouraging, but we recognize that we can achieve our aspirations for a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Africa only by bringing about structural transformation. That is why we are capitalizing on the golden jubilee celebration to chart a transformation agenda for Africa to be implemented over the next 50 years. At our most recent session, in May, we also adopted our AU Commission's strategic plan for the period 2014-2017, whose main objective is to lay a solid foundation for the realization of our vision in the short and medium term.

It is indeed opportune that we are crafting our transformation agenda when intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 global development framework have begun in earnest. I am glad that the Assembly will debate that issue at this session, and I commend the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, co-chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and Liberia and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, for presenting their comprehensive report, *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development*, to the Secretary-General. I hope that the report will provide valuable input for our discussions of the theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage" during this session.

Africa considers this issue to be of paramount importance and has formed a high-level committee of Heads of State and Government to develop a common position and galvanize international support in order to ensure that the successes achieved thus far in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals are sustained and its development priorities beyond 2015 are fully taken on board. As the able Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has aptly put it, what Africa needs is structural transformation, not structural adjustment. The development agenda we are trying to set for Africa over the next 50 years is also aimed at achieving that fundamental objective, with a view to eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development. With respect to the work of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, we intend to come up with a well-thought-out African position as an outcome

of the initiative of our troika: the African Union Commission, UNECA and the African Development Bank.

In that context, we want to achieve a green revolution in Africa and ensure food security for our peoples. The theme of the African Union in 2014 will be "Agriculture and food security" and will promote the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, which will allow us to reinforce our commitment to the transformation of the agricultural sector in Africa.

We are also convinced of the need for Africa to industrialize in order to accelerate its economic growth, generate employment, increase income and diversify exports. That can be done on the basis of our factor endowments and taking into account the need for us to increase added value and exploit forward and backward linkages. It cannot be emphasized enough that overcoming poverty is impossible without structural transformation and value addition, which makes industrialization not an option but a must — an unavoidable necessity for Africa. Let me state here how grateful we are to all those who have made partnerships available to us to ensure that Africa develops the capacity for modern and affordable energy, without which industrialization would be impossible to achieve.

Furthermore, we would like to invest in infrastructure, which has been neglected over past decades, in order to promote intra-African trade and fast-track regional integration. We are also committed to redoubling our efforts to improve the overall well-being of our society. In particular, we believe that Africa should reap the benefits of its demographic dividend by investing in its people. Educating our youth and upgrading their skills is critical to the effective use of our human capital. Therefore we very much hope that the post-2015 global development framework will be aligned to our development priorities and needs.

We in Africa certainly recognize that we cannot realize our development aspirations in the absence of durable peace and security. That is why we have concentrated tremendous efforts in addressing the scourge of conflicts on our continent. We are indeed very pleased to note the drastic decline in the number of conflicts in Africa during the last decade, with the exception of a few situations. But we also understand that there is a new security dynamic on our continent, with the rise of popular dissatisfaction associated with demands yet unmet.

In that regard, the African Union has been exerting efforts to assist Egypt — a member State whose contribution to the decolonization process on our continent and to African unity has been second to none — to overcome its current difficulties in the spirit of African solidarity. The African Union is also extending all the necessary support to Tunisia in order to ensure a successful political transition through the adoption of a new constitution and the holding of elections.

On the other hand, we welcome the successful conduct of elections in Mali that paved the way for the restoration of constitutional order in that country. The African Union is indeed firmly committed to continue assisting Mali in its efforts to ensure lasting peace, security and development. We derive satisfaction from the significant progress made in Somalia towards peace in the country, and we are also encouraged by the agreement reached between the Federal Republic of Somalia and the Juba Interim Administration, which constitutes a significant milestone in promoting peace and national reconciliation. The New Deal announced at the Somalia Conference in Brussels on 16 September will certainly strengthen the momentum for the reconstruction of the country and building peace there.

The security and humanitarian situation in Central African Republic is still a matter of serious concern. I wish to reiterate our call to the United Nations to provide multifaceted support to the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, which will be deployed in that country to protect civilians and restore security and public order. On the other hand, the escalation of tension in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo also poses threats to the peace and security of the Great Lakes region and the continent as a whole. The only durable solution is for both the Government and the armed opposition to conclude their peace talks under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). In that connection, I would like to welcome the outcome of the ICGLR Extraordinary Summit held in Kampala on 5 September 2013 and High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held in New York on 23 September in New York under the auspices of the President of the Assembly.

With regard to relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, the African Union, in close collaboration with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, has established an ad hoc investigation mechanism to

verify allegations made by the two countries regarding each country's support for and harbouring of dissident elements that act against the other. The team is carrying out its work, and I am hopeful that the outcome of the investigation will help the two countries to move forward in the implementation of the agreements they have signed and in the normalization of their relations. On a more practical level, the summits and the regular engagement that the leaders of the two countries are having will go a long way in breaking the impasse and resolving some of the difficult outstanding issues.

I would like to raise one important issue that has been a matter of serious concern for us in our efforts to promote peace, security and national reconciliation on the continent and regarding which there is a strong consensus in Africa. Time and again, we in Africa have affirmed our unflinching commitment to fighting impunity and promoting democracy, rule of law and good governance throughout the continent, in conformity with the Constitutive Act of the African Union. That commitment has been empirically validated by bold actions taken recently by the African Union.

When it comes to the International Criminal Court (ICC), many of our member States ratified the Rome Statute faithfully, subscribing to its cardinal objectives and principles. Unfortunately, the manner in which the ICC has been operating has left a very bad impression in Africa. Instead of promoting justice and reconciliation and contributing to peace and stability, it has degenerated into a political instrument targeting Africa and Africans. This is totally unacceptable, and that is why Africa has been expressing its serious reservations against the body.

It is regrettable that our repeated request to the United Nations Security Council to defer the proceedings initiated against President Al-Bashir has been neither heard nor acted upon. We have also received no response to our request for a deferral of the ICC investigations and prosecutions in relation to the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, in line with the principle of complementarity, to allow for a national mechanism to investigate and prosecute the cases under a reformed judiciary provided for in the new constitutional dispensation.

In light of the encouraging developments in Kenya with the adoption of the new Constitution, the reform of the judiciary and the holding of successful legislative and presidential elections, we believe it is very critical to support the peacebuilding and national reconciliation processes in the country. The recent decision of the ICC in relation to the Kenyan situation is unhelpful and adversely affects the ability of the Kenyan leaders in the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to once again urge the Security Council to respond to our requests.

In an increasingly globalized and multipolar world, Africa obviously needs to forge multiple partnerships to realize its development aspirations and assume its rightful place in the international arena. It gives me great satisfaction to note that Africa's strategic partnership with both developed and emerging economies has expanded and deepened in recent years. That is the path we wish to pursue. Africa needs the solidarity of all sections of the international community, and it is our hope that all the necessary support will be extended to Africa in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), which underlined so emphatically the special situation of Africa. That, in our view, should be the spirit with which the deficit in the implementation of Millennium Development Goal 8 must be treated during the very short time remaining.

In conclusion I wish to underline Africa's enduring commitment to this indispensable global body — a universal organization whose viability is an existential necessity. It is in that spirit that Africa will continue to nurture its close cooperation with the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Spencer (Antigua and Barbuda): I stand in the Hall today as the leader of one of the smallest countries in the world — small by size, population and resources. I also stand here today with a proud heart and a strong voice because my small country of Antigua and Barbuda has produced a giant in the world's geopolitical sphere. He is among the finest and most accomplished diplomats to have ever walked these great halls. The Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda send congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador John William Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are beyond sure that he will guide this body through a successful session. I offer congratulations also to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, on a job well done and for his unrelenting service to the international community.

Exactly five years ago today, I stood in this hallowed Hall and stated that:

> "We are all members of one body. The welfare of the weakest and the welfare of the most powerful are inseparably bound together. Industry cannot flourish if labour languishes. Transportation cannot prosper if manufacturing declines. The general welfare cannot be provided for in any one act, but it is well to remember that the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all." (*A/64/PV.7, p. 32*)

With the ever-increasing gaps in equality among nations, the challenges for developing countries over the years have remained vast. In trying to address the issue of inequality and to diminish very basic human challenges by 2015, world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs were described as a milestone in international cooperation. With a 15-year timespan for their implementation, the Declaration was widely expected to inspire development and to directly improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people. They are the people who are struggling to survive in the most basic living conditions and who are suffering from the effects of poverty, gender inequities, ill health and environmental degradation.

Thirteen years have gone by, and what do we, as a global community, have to show in terms of concrete results? No matter which side of the lens we look through, something is appallingly wrong. With less than two years to go before 2015, we must ask ourselves as leaders why those commitments, related to the most significant global declaration made to the world's most vulnerable people, are not being fulfilled.

It is important for me to be extremely clear. I am not here to declare the MDGs dead, nor am I advocating that they be interred. Rather, I remain convinced that they can still be refocused, reformed, reshaped and rebranded into a new mechanism post-2015.

We find ourselves standing at the precipice of 2015, that crucial defining moment. The current moment is captured by notable but uneven developments in some crucial areas. Considerable gaps remain and new challenges have emerged. As leaders we must therefore acknowledge that now more than ever, through the process of globalization, individuals and societies from one corner of the Earth to another, from oceans and continents, are intricately connected and more interdependent than ever before. Therefore, a post-2015 development agenda must concede that fact and be guided by that reality.

The deliberations for international collaboration and development ahead of 2015 present the opportunity to redirect previous notions of prosperity and development among nations. Considering the current world economic, social and environmental challenges, that is indisputably critical.

We must concede that the current structure of the internationally agreed development goals does not provide satisfactory remedies to our universal problems, which include an increase in global warming, the escalating gap between the worlds's rich and the poor, the further deterioration of the world's financial system and the uneven roles that developed and developing countries play in responding to and addressing issues of universal importance and impact on our societies. Taking into account some of those shortcomings, now is the opportune time for setting the stage for a post-2015 development agenda that is all-inclusive, effective and pragmatic.

Of concern to Antigua and Barbuda are the failings of the international community in fulfilling the aims and objectives outlined in the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small

Island Developing States (SIDS). The year 2014 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which was held in Barbados in 1994.

Looking back over the 20 years since that Conference, we see that the international community's actions to address the unique and special circumstances of SIDS have been lacking. It is my hope that the SIDS conference in Samoa in 2014 will give the international community the opportunity to correct the wrongs made and to improve on shortcomings with regard to SIDS. The conference will also present us with a third chance to identify a set of concrete actions, which will be needed for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation and thereby regain momentum lost by SIDS in the quest for sustainable development.

We welcome the decision by the United Nations family to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States. Antigua and Barbuda pledges to highlight throughout 2014 the issue of SIDS with the aim of reinvigorating the SIDS agenda.

My Government firmly believes in promoting partnerships supporting sustainable development based on the principles of mutual respect and understanding, equality and a genuine desire to affect the social and economic development of all. My Government has deepened our integration efforts with our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) brothers and sisters, focusing on fully implementing the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, as well as deepening the various subregional regulatory frameworks.

As a member of the smaller grouping of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Antigua a..d Barbuda has fully joined and endorsed the OECS economic union in an effort to build on the shared tradition of our subregional integration arrangements and to expand the areas of shared sovereignty in order to survive and ultimately thrive. At the same time, my Government has secured full participation in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and the Community of Latin American a Caribbean States, as we seek to further strengthen the integration and development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

It is a recognized fact, but one worth repeating, that small island States contribute the least to the causes of climate change yet suffer the most from its effects. We small island States have expressed our profound disappointment at the lack of tangible action within the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to protect SIDS and other vulnerable countries, their peoples, culture, land and ecosystems. The responsibility for mitigating climate change is shared by all nations, developed and developing. However, developed countries should shoulder their moral, ethical and historical responsibility for emitting anthropogenic greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is those actions that have now put the planet in jeopardy and compromised the well-being of present and future generations.

Vulnerable developing societies such as ours are also victims of the globalization of crime, notably in the havoc wrought by handguns in the possession of criminal elements, by narcotrafficking that is essentially targeted at markets in developed countries and by the deportation of criminals to our shores. We urge the international community, in recognition of the link between globalization and crime, to provide greater support for the efforts of small island States such as Antigua and Barbuda to address the escalation of crime and strengthen the rule of law in combating international drug trafficking. We further call on our developed partners to reduce the practice of deporting violent criminals to our shores. Most of those deportees have neither connection nor familiarity with our countries.

Antigua and Barbuda is proud to be among the growing number of States that have signed and ratified the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The Treaty will, among other things, assist Antigua and Barbuda in enhancing its capacity to tackle the scourge created by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which is associated with other transboundary crimes, such as drug trafficking. We have emphasized throughout the process that such crimes have had a negative impact on the socioeconomic well-being of our societies. Antigua and Barbuda stresses the importance of the early entry into force of the ATT and will continue to work energetically with Member States to ensure its entry into force.

Another threat to the sustainable development of small island developing States such as Antigua and Barbuda is the rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The situation is at an alarming stage, as hundreds succumb annually. For Antigua and Barbuda, the prevention, care and treatment of non-communicable

diseases continue to be a challenge. Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the leading causes of death in our region. Our health-care system, economy and population are heavily burdened by NCDs; it is for that reason that my Government has become even more proactive in addressing the issue. Health care continues to be basically free for Antiguans and Barbudans, and the Government often helps citizens seek treatment abroad when our facilities at home are unable to provide it. I ask the Assembly to continue to keep the issue of NCDs high on its agenda.

My small developing nation of Antigua and Barbuda has sought to ensure that the trade rules agreed to by a majority of members of the international community, including the United States of America, are adhered to. I take this opportunity to once again draw the Assembly's attention to a trade dispute between my country and the United States of America that has been ongoing for a decade and which has been submitted to the dispute settlement system of the World Trade Organization (WTO). I draw the Assembly's attention to the dispute because I believe it has the potential to damage the credibility and undermine the utility of the WTO's dispute settlement system and of the WTO itself.

My Government won the case at both the original and appellate levels and yet, a decade later, the end is not in sight. It is a case that pits the world's largest economy against one of the smallest, and despite our best efforts, our patient negotiations with the United States of America have borne no fruit. The United States of America has neither removed the offending laws nor agreed on a fair settlement with Antigua and Barbuda that would compensate for the wanton destruction of an entire economic sector. We believe that it is a blow to the credibility of the WTO to allow the world's largest economy and the WTO's most powerful member to ignore the lawful decision of its dispute settlement tribunal without consequences. The international trading system will not long survive such a profound challenge, and we call on the United States to correct past wrongs and come to the table with meaningful proposals that can bring the matter to a just conclusion.

Although my Government has until now exercised strategic patience, we intend, through the only mechanism that the WTO has provided, to seek compensation for the thousands of jobs lost, the companies collapsed and the general devastation of the second-largest sector of our economy after tourism. More than jobs are at stake here. The WTO must be seen to deliver justice to its members, especially one of its smallest constituents. If not, its credibility as the arbiter of international trade disputes will bleed into the dust and hollow out its noble intentions.

As a part of the Caribbean and a member of the CARICOM family, Antigua and Barbuda supports the preservation of the sovereignty of every nation. We are therefore very proud of our long-standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. My Government condemns in the strongest possible terms any discriminatory or retaliatory policies and practices designed to prevent Cuba from exercising its right to freely participate in the affairs of our hemisphere. Today, I once again reiterate my Government's firm condemnation of the unilateral and extraterritorial application of coercive laws and measures contrary to international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of free navigation and international trade. Antigua and Barbuda therefore urges the United States of America to respect and take note of the unceasing call by the Members of the United Nations that it immediately lift the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on the Republic of Cuba. These and other associated measures serve no other end than to hinder the socioeconomic development and well-being of the people of the Republic of Cuba.

Antigua and Barbuda also affirms its long-standing stance and commitment towards combating terrorism in all its forms and expressions and condemns any action which goes against international law, resolutions of the United Nations or principles of human rights protection. We therefore condemn the recent terrorist acts in Kenya and express our profound sympathy to the Government of President Uhuru Kenyatta and the families of those who lost loved ones. We also in the strongest sense condemn acts of terrorism in other parts of the world.

Antigua and Barbuda also expresses its concern about the inclusion of the Republic of Cuba on the list of State sponsors of terrorism published by the State Department of the United States of America. We reject the unilateral elaboration of blacklists accusing States of allegedly supporting and sponsoring terrorism, which is inconsistent with international law. We request the United States of America to put an end to that unilateral practice.

Antigua and Barbuda welcomes the launch of the design for a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, an initiative that was championed by CARICOM. We also look forward to its full erection in the coming months.

One year ago, I stood here and reiterated the need for serious dialogue on the topic of reparations. Today I am proud that the members of CARICOM, at its thirty-fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, held in Trinidad and Tobago in July, agreed to support the establishment of a regional reparations commission to begin laying the groundwork for a process of engagement and conversation on the issue of reparations for native genocide and slavery.

I am equally pleased that the first regional reparations conference was held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines earlier this month, with proposals for the formalization of a regional reparations commission. Antigua and Barbuda therefore conceptualizes the call for reparations as an integral element of our development strategy and believes that the legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean has severely impaired our development options. We therefore assert that reparations must be directed towards repairing the damage inflicted by slavery and racism.

We have recently seen a number of leaders apologizing to the African diaspora, to indigenous peoples and to former colonies for past wrongs and injustices. I salute those leaders who have demonstrated such enlightenment and strongly encourage others to do so and equally match their words with concrete and material benefits to the descendants of genocide and the brutal enslavement of their ancestors.

My country, while developmentally focused, is mindful of other global issues, particularly with reference to peace and security. The continued unrest in the Middle East, particularly in Syria, is heartbreaking. The images of innocent women and children being displaced and killed tug at my consciousness. Antigua and Barbuda gives its unconditional support to the preservation of the role of the United Nations and other organizations in working towards stabilization and peace in Syria and other conflict-ridden countries.

In the same vein, we call on those leaders to protect civilians at all costs and move quickly to devise diplomatic solutions to the conflicts. Wilful and deliberate attacks upon civilians should be taken seriously by the international community, and the international courts should move to act in a manner consistent with international laws and norms.

War, or even the threat of war, should be an absolute last resort and should have the full support of the international community at all times. Unilateral prescriptions will never solve a problem.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders stand idle and see the tears and desperation on the faces of the many children who are hungry. We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders allow easily treatable illnesses and diseases to destroy our populations.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders sit back and allow the lines of class divisions and insurmountable social barriers to increase.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders continue to allow the imbalances of economic growth, destructive trade barriers and protectionism from developed to developing countries to persist.

We cannot successfully achieve a post-2015 development agenda if world leaders do not act to save our environment and stop the pollution of our air and oceans and the wanton destruction of our forests and lands only for the benefit of a few.

When the founders of the United Nations formulated this great institution, it was not envisioned as a stage or a repository for eloquent speeches. The United Nations was conceptualized as a place where our challenges would be discussed, solutions cultivated and action taken.

It is for those reasons that our leaders gathered here today should work towards a fundamental, impartial and sustainable social, economic and environmental post-2015 development agenda that is far-reaching and all-inclusive. Anything less would be unacceptable and would be a travesty for millions of the world's inhabitants, for whom we are required to act and do so courageously and decisively.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Bainimarama (Fiji): At the outset, I wish to congratulate President Ashe on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and express my confidence that under his able and wise guidance, the Assembly will successfully accomplish its many tasks. I would also like to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of last year's President, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, and extend my appreciation for the effectiveness with which he directed the work of the Assembly at the previous session.

Fiji reached a pivotal moment in its history earlier this month, when His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji promulgated the nation's new Constitution. This Constitution introduces the first genuine democracy that Fiji will enjoy since we gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1970. Forty-three years and three Constitutions later, we finally have a Constitution that is worthy of the Fijian people. It is a Constitution that meets the test of a genuine democracy, that upholds the legal and moral basis of a common and equal citizenry without denying anyone's individuality or culture.

The 2013 Fijian Constitution enshrines principles that are at the heart of all the world's great liberal democracies: an independent judiciary, a secular State and a wide range of civil, political and socioeconomic rights. It recognizes the indigenous peoples of Fiji and their customary practices, protects the rights of the predominantly indigenous landowners and those of their tenants, demands accountability and transparency from Government officials, builds strong and independent institutions and replaces our old weighted electoral system with one based on the principle of one person, one vote, one value. That historic achievement is the culmination of a path that Fiji embarked on in 2007 to establish a modern and stable society that can be a proud and responsible part of the global community.

For years we struggled to be a nation under a system that created different classes of citizens and in which the votes of some Fijians counted more than others. How could we be one nation when our fundamental law said that we were not one people? The very idea of a just and equal society, of an accountable Government and of loyalty to the nation State was being eroded from within. There were too many elites who thought the best way to entrench their own privileges was to sow the seeds of division and undermine our independent institutions. The removals of the Government in 1987 and 2000 were the most radical expressions of that dysfunction.

As a result, tens of thousands of Fijians suffered, and many made the decision to leave their home forever — to leave Fiji. As I have said before, that is one of the most shameful episodes of our history, and I am determined that it must never, ever happen again. We must never allow a fellow citizen to be second class or to be less than an equal of his neighbour. Surely, such a basic principle as that deserves the full support of all nations that would never accept any less for their own people.

So we have set out to make a change for the good, a permanent change that would set the nation on a straight course and allow Fiji to finally reach the potential it had when we so enthusiastically embraced our independence. It has been a long journey, and we have faced numerous challenges along the way. But it is with great pleasure and deep honour that I stand here today and say: our national compass has finally been reset. Under the new Constitution, we are heading towards Fiji's first genuinely democratic elections by September 2014 and a much brighter future as one nation.

With every month that passes, we are building the foundations of our new parliamentary democracy. Unlike in the past, we are building a credible and fair system that will guide that process. Four political parties have registered thus far under the new laws, which create transparency and accountability, and

close to 540,000 Fijians — out of an estimated 620,000 eligible voters — have registered for the 2014 election.

Many modern, stable democracies have gone through their own turbulent periods. Some have gone through decades of instability and bloodshed, while others have had a single defining moment. Those events changed the course of history. They turned their countries from bastions of elitism and oppression into nations of freedom, equality and true democracy. The United States has its Bunker Hill and Civil War. France has the storming of the Bastille and the French revolution. Australia has the Eureka Stockade, and Britain has had a bloody history as it struggled to establish a constitutional monarchy. We Fijians have also had our share of turbulence.

Regrettably and to our great disappointment, some of our oldest friends had no faith in us. They abandoned us and sought to punish us with sanctions. We sought their assistance and understanding, but they turned their backs on us. They chose to support a form of democracy, governance and justice in Fiji that they would never have accepted for themselves. We hope that they see now that we were true to our word. All nations struggle over time to overcome their unique challenges, to correct historic sins and to be worthy of the principles on which they were founded. We in Fiji are no different. Our isolation led us to seek out new relationships, which have proven fruitful. Now, our standing in the world has never been stronger.

A key principle that has guided Fiji's political development and foreign policy and is soundly grounded in the Charter of the United Nations is that we determine our own destinies as sovereign States. At the same time, we recognize the necessity of collaborating with all Member States of the United Nations with the aim of supporting sustainable world peace, substantive justice, dignity and respect for all. It is that spirit of collaboration that has inspired us to go beyond parochial interests and reach out to help others. That spirit enjoins us to be loyal to common ideals, goals, values and principles. They remain our guiding beacons as we navigate our way in this millennium.

The theme set by the President to guide the general debate at this sixty-eighth session, which is "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage," is most fitting for the juncture at which the United Nations stands. In the midst of increasing poverty and underdevelopment and during an era of unprecedented wealth accumulation and technological advances, the rift that divides the rich and the poor zones of the world ever widens. We must therefore not lose focus on one imperative of our time: equality among nations, big and small, is central to the relevance, credibility and even survival of this global Organization.

In that regard, we are encouraged by the progress made thus far in the General Assembly towards expeditiously launching the follow-up mechanisms agreed at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012. Throughout the course of this year, the Group of 77 and China has emphasized that the road map towards a post-2015 development agenda needs to address the implementation gaps of the Millennium Development Goals, with poverty eradication remaining an overarching goal. The new development agenda must be universal, applicable and relevant to all Member States. Let me also stress that the new development agenda should be centred on economic development that supports both social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Our common desire for a transformative global development agenda beyond 2015 can best be achieved through collective efforts and an enhanced global partnership. Such efforts must place the development and well-being of people at its core. If the international community and national Governments seriously commit to an agenda for meaningful transformation at the structural, institutional and normative levels, the post-2015 development agenda has the potential of achieving a paradigm shift in global conditions.

Fiji's commitment to being a good global citizen is manifested through our ongoing engagement with the United Nations and its associated agencies and secretariats. Our decision to take on the mantle of chairing the Group of 77 and China for the year 2013 was informed by the fact that Fiji embraces its rights as an equal Member of the United Nations and that we must therefore also carry all the due responsibilities expected of us within this great family of nations.

Fiji's commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unwavering. It is a source of great pride that, for a nation of our size, we are able to make a meaningful and significant contribution. For the past three decades, we have always responded to the call of the United Nations to serve, including in the most difficult circumstances around the world. While we fully recognize the risks involved, Fiji's confidence in

its peacekeepers prompted us to provide troops to the Golan Heights this year to assist the United Nations in a time of need. The many years of service of Fijian troops in the Middle East region, particularly in Lebanon, Iraq and Sinai, are an asset that our troops take with them to that mission. Fiji also sees police peacekeeping and contributions in the corrections and justice sector as important in building local State institutions that can be run by local authorities once peacekeeping missions end, and we are building on our many existing commitments in that regard in Liberia, Darfur and South Sudan.

It is up to us in the General Assembly to ensure that all support possible is given to troop- and police-contributing countries serving on the ground, including through clear and appropriate policy guidance. For the good of the countries concerned, we must not abdicate that responsibility. I urge us all to work together in the United Nations to provide such concrete policy guidance, particularly as we see peacekeeping missions evolve into multidimensional and complex missions that differ greatly from early United Nations peacekeeping missions.

As a Pacific island nation, Fiji reaffirms its support for the efforts of small island developing States (SIDS) to achieve sustainable development. Not only are SIDS acutely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise, ocean acidification and the increased frequency of extreme weather events, but for some of us the threat is to our very existence. Our response to the plight of those most at risk must therefore be characterized by a requisite sense of urgency.

The convening of the third International Conference for Sustainable Development of SIDS in 2014 will be critical to addressing, in a very specific and concrete manner, the many challenges faced by SIDS. It is an opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to the implementation of the decisions and agreements pertaining to SIDS. As the international community discusses the post-2015 development landscape, including a successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action, we must ensure that a new model accounts for and addresses the risks we face. This is particularly relevant for SIDS, where hundreds of millions of dollars in economic losses occur as a result of so-called natural disasters every year. Protecting development gains and investing in disaster resilience is vital to sustainable development.

The United Nations efforts to eradicate colonialism must forge ahead within the context of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, of which Fiji is a member. Through the Pacific regional body known as the Melanesian Spearhead Group, Fiji works together with other members of the Fourth Committee to accelerate the process of decolonization.

In reforming and developing its information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure, Fiji has adopted a comprehensive approach by combining a national framework for ICT development with effective and pragmatic policies and initiatives to deliver results directly to the Fijian people. That approach is bearing fruit. Fiji has achieved 95 per cent mobile coverage, including 3G; concluded one of the region's first open auctions for the 4G spectrum; and is implementing a number of innovative initiatives to increase affordable access and improve services, including in the most remote parts of our country.

The International Telecommunication Union, in its annual review of more than 150 countries' delivery of ICT infrastructure and services to their populations, gave special recognition to Fiji as a developing country. Fiji tied for the third largest improvement of any country and is ranked fourth globally in percentage terms, having improved by 14 per cent.

As the first country to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Fiji has kept its oceanic obligations at the core of its foreign policy. While some disconnect exists between what is contained in international instruments and what is or is not implemented, we need a commitment to clear steps to turn words into actions in order to facilitate the sustainable management of ocean resources and make equitable the share of benefits from their utilization.

Fiji hosted the inaugural Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF) last month. Its formation makes the PIDF the only South-South organization in the Pacific region that provides for a multi-stakeholder platform where Governments, the private sector and civil society can discuss what we Pacific Islanders need to do to achieve sustainable development.

We look forward to a productive sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Let me reiterate our full support and cooperation with President Ashe and all members with a view to advancing the objectives of the United Nations and the aspirations of the global community.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Military Forces, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Josaia V. Bainimarama, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji and Commander of the Military Forces, was escorted from the rostrum.

Statement by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and inviting him to make a statement.

Mr. Van Rompuy (European Council): A year ago when we met in the General Assembly, we joined our voices to deplore the fact that the Syrian civil war had claimed over 25,000 lives. One year on, it has killed over 100,000 men, women and children. The number of refugees, which stood at 250,000 in September 2012, doubled by December that year, then doubled again by March, and then it doubled again. Today, there are 2 million Syrians outside their country, half of them children, and under current trends, their number is close to doubling again, and there may be 3.5 million refugees before the year is over. We cannot let this spiral of criminal, sectarian violence pursue its dreadful course at the heart of the world's most unstable region. What will the situation be when we meet again next year?

Any further paralysis of the international community over Syria is simply untenable. It was already true this summer, but worse was yet to come. Five weeks ago in the outskirts of Damascus, there was a new threshold of tragedy, a crime against humanity, and in response the stakes were raised. Today we are in a new situation.

The European Union welcomes the diplomatic opening created in order to control and destroy Syria's chemical weapons. It is important in itself. We absolutely must avoid a dreadful precedent being set on the use of chemical weapons — an abhorrent crime against humanity. The role of the United Nations in this respect is indispensable and has been underscored time and again by the 28 Governments of the European Union.

Following the Secretary-General's report and the inventory of its arsenal provided by the Syrian regime, it is urgent for the Security Council, together with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, to take the necessary decisions to ensure the swift and secure destruction of Syria's stocks of poison gas and nerve agents. A clear resolution of the Security Council would mark a turn, and I plea for its adoption.

Eliminating Syria's chemical arsenal is in itself a major step. Potentially, it could also be important for the wider dynamics in the region. Clearly, the conflict wrecking Syria reflects many of the deep-seated tensions rippling throughout the Middle East. It is fed by these tensions and fuels them as well. So a solution for Syria will need to take the wider picture into account. That is why any political opening matters deeply; a breakthrough on chemical weapons could start opening other doors. In the black wall of Syria's doom, it will be a first crack.

Paradoxically, there is more scope for quiet hope today than there was even a few weeks ago. Because if commitments can be upheld and promises kept on chemical weapons, if lines of communication can reopen, if we can find an agreement within the international community and at the Security Council — if we can do all this on chemical weapons, then chances are we can do it elsewhere.

There must be ways to open up opportunities. But when new opportunities arise, we must seize them. Only then will we see the outlook improve for Syria. Now is indeed the moment to work actively towards the "Geneva II" conference. The international community must fully engage with all available diplomatic means. The first priority is to bring all parties to the negotiating table. Those close to Damascus and those close to the Syrian opposition must do all within their power to draw each side to the table. The European Union is ready to provide all support needed to achieve a political settlement.

Elsewhere in the region too, new opportunities must and can be seized, not least in the Middle East peace process, where prospects for progress look better than they have for some time. All parties are returning to the negotiating table with renewed seriousness. For the European Union, the parameters are clear. Palestine and

Israel must be able to fulfil their legitimate aspirations as two States living side by side in peace and security. Now both parties must seize the moment.

We also hope that the expectations currently building around the new Iranian leadership will translate into concrete steps in the interest of regional stability and for the nuclear talks, where all efforts to find a negotiated solution, through the work of the E3+3 led by High Representative Catherine Ashton, have the European Union's full support. Both these developments — with Israel and Palestine and with Iran — can be mutually reinforcing with what is currently happening around Syria; there, all must be done to forge the path to a political solution.

Once the "Geneva II" conference starts, we have to be honest with ourselves. It will not be easy — ending a war never is. It will require political will and a real sense of compromise. But we must recognize that the cost of hesitating, of not engaging, would be much higher, and not only for the people of Syria. Every day counts. With every day of unforgivable violence, bitterness and trauma go deeper, radicalization and warlordism gain ground, hatred and despair win. Every day, reconciliation in Syria and around Syria becomes harder.

We in Europe know that reconciliation is the hardest thing. The countries of our continent agreed to live peacefully together only after many wars, and many civil wars, with huge numbers of victims — a price we never want others to have to pay. And we know reconciliation is even harder inside a country than between countries. No longer waging war is one thing; living again together is quite another.

Syria — as a country and a nation — is being destroyed beyond recognition. It will take time, courage and perseverance to build an inclusive, united, democratic Syria, where all Syrians can feel they belong and where all share a common future regardless of their identity and regardless of their religion. The promise of the Arab Spring must be met in Syria too, just as it must in Egypt and beyond. At heart, it is a shared yearning for democracy, for tolerance, for social justice — a powerful message in which we still believe.

But on this long path, the Syrians will need all the help they can get, just as others before, including we in Europe, received support when mending their nations. The United Nations can play an important role in helping the country to re-establish unity and in helping Syria eventually find justice and ensuring that there is no impunity and that individual perpetrators of war crimes are held accountable.

We Europeans are ready to play our part in helping Syria to rebuild its nation, just as we are engaged today on the ground in the humanitarian effort in Syria and in the countries to which refugees have flown, not least in Lebanon and Jordan, where the situation is extremely worrying. Our countries and institutions are working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to bring food, protection and shelter, as well as medical help and education. By far the biggest aid provider for Syria, jointly we have already provided €1.8 billion — some $2.4 billion — and we know that more will be needed.

(*spoke in French*)

We do so because Europe is ready to continue to play its role in the world. To many countries, whether in Africa, Latin America or Asia or from the Mediterranean to the Caspian, the European Union is a faithful partner in development, peace and security, for the Millennium Development Goals and world propserity through open trade. We are a strong partner in the fight against the extremism and barbarism of which the events in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq are recent and tragic manifestations.

Despite the financial crisis that is testing our economies, we do not disengage from our responsibilities in the world. Despite the crisis, we have maintained all European funding for development and humanitarian action in our common European budget, even as we reduce its size. Despite the crisis, we maintain our political and financial commitment against climate change in Europe and the world, and we will lend our full support to the international conference in Paris in 2015.

Indeed, despite the crisis, the European Union launched no fewer than five new European civilian or military missions over the past two years aimed at supporting reconstruction in Mali and South Sudan and re-establishing security in the Sahel and along Libya's borders and off the coast of Somalia. Moreover, in 2013 we renewed operational mandates in Afghanistan, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In crisis and conflict areas, the European presence on the ground is composed of doctors, paramedics, agronomists and engineers; it also includes magistrates and police and military personnel — men and women who assist their local counterparts in efforts to stabilize

a country, re-establish order and the rule of law, restore the sense of justice and build confidence in the future.

(*spoke in English*)

Europe is not disengaging, despite the economic difficulties that the past few years have brought. The global financial crisis, which started in this very city five years ago, shook Europe and brought forth global imbalances that we have worked hard to address. We are putting our house in order and expect others to do so too. Internal imbalances need to be corrected and structural reforms pursued in countries all across the globe. For us, the results are starting to show. Today the eurozone is in better financial shape than 12 months ago. The existential threat to the euro area is over, and we are now focusing fully on improving prospects for employment and growth. We have launched far-reaching efforts, focused on the long term. It will take time before results show, in terms of strong economic growth and jobs, but once they start doing so, as they are now, they will be longer lasting. Next year, economic growth is projected for all but one of our 28 countries.

Our political will to preserve Europe's unity cannot be underestimated — we have shown it over the past five years — for, ultimately, it is a political project that unites us: to bring together countries; to bring together people.

(*spoke in French*)

In the month of September 2013, here in New York, the international community can and must make a comeback. It is our common responsibility, shared by all of us present here today, to translate the positive signs into concrete progress for peace and prosperity. I therefore call for negotiation, dialogue and the conclusion of international agreements based on the conviction — which is at the very foundation of this Organization — that international political progress happens through the free exchange of ideas among countries.

That holds true for Syria, with regard to both chemical weapons and the "Geneva II" conference. It holds true for the Middle East peace process and for the nuclear talks with Iran. But it also holds true for all the other great global challenges. It is from here in New York that a new momentum can and must emerge for the important upcoming global meetings on climate change, in Warsaw in November, on free trade in Bali in December, or on financial regulation at the Group of 20 in Brisbane next year. To exchange words that bring about action is itself an act of hope, and it is precisely hope that we need.

(*spoke in English*)

Hope is in our hands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

His Highness Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is with pleasure that I extend, on behalf of the Government and people of the State of Kuwait, our sincere congratulations to Mr. Ashe and to his country, Antigua and Barbuda, upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We are certain that his vast experience in international affairs will enable him to conduct the deliberations of this session wisely and ably, and we wish him success in that endeavour. We extend our thanks to Mr. Vuk Jeremić for his great efforts as President at the previous session.

I should also like to pay tribute to the tremendous and tireless efforts by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in leading the Organization and disseminating its lofty message and in seeking to maintain international peace and security, in fulfilment of the aspirations of the States and peoples of the world for a better world that guarantees a life of dignity for all human beings.

The State of Kuwait condemns the acts of terrorism committed in a shopping centre in Nairobi on Saturday,

21 September. We extend our sincerest condolences to the people and Government of Kenya and to the families of the victims. We also underscore again our support for Bahrain and all of the measures being undertaken there to strengthen security.

The maintenance of regional and international peace and security occupies a position of great importance among the priorities of the foreign policy of the State of Kuwait, based on its principles and objectives, the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law, which call for the building of bridges of confidence, good-neighbourly relations, mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, as well as for the promotion of the concepts of peaceful coexistence and the pursuit of peaceful settlements to conflicts and disputes.

In November 2012, the State of Kuwait celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of its Constitution, which was the result of a distinctive experience reflecting relations between ruler and subject. It evolved in a historically seamless manner into a democratic mechanism involving popular participation. That process has embodied the essence and values of political growth based on a commitment to working for peace, as well as developing and strengthening relations with neighbouring countries in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, common interests and rising above the wounds of the past in order to chart a better future for the region and the world.

In that context, I would highlight our bilateral relations with the Republic of Iraq and to commend the efforts of the Iraqi Government to fulfil its international commitments to the State of Kuwait, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Our bilateral relations have developed in positive and tangible ways through communications at the highest level between the leadership of both countries. We have overcome our past differences and are looking to the future to strengthen and develop future bilateral relations for the welfare and interests of the peoples of both countries.

We also look forward to genuine cooperation with the Republic of Iraq in order to find the remains of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals and undertake a serious search for the national archives of the State of Kuwait, in implementation of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013). That resolution was adopted following the understanding reached to transfer follow-up responsibility for these matters from the High-level Coordinator on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and his concern to accelerate the closure of these two issues, discover the fate of the remaining missing persons and put an end to their families' suffering.

More than two and a half years have passed since the eruption of the crisis in Syria. This crisis is more than a humanitarian disaster; it is fast approaching the definition of a catastrophe, with the increasing numbers of victims and missing persons, both internally and externally, and the recurring scenes of bloodshed, violence, destruction, oppression and violation of the most basic principles and values of humankind. The scale of the crisis has become an obstacle to any possible solution that could contain it, despite the great and continued efforts at the regional and international levels. The Security Council has been faced with a historic and decisive responsibility: to start taking serious and tangible steps to ensure solutions that can guarantee an end to the bloodshed of the brotherly Syrian people, achieve their demands and restore security and stability in their country.

In January 2013, in response to the suffering of the Syrian people owing to the exacerbation of the crisis and its destructive consequences, the State of Kuwait hosted an international donors conference to support the humanitarian situation in Syria. This conference achieved the desired results, and pledges surpassed the targeted amount of $1.5 billion, of which the State of Kuwait contributed $300 million. This amount has been disbursed in full to a number of United Nations bodies and agencies, which converted it into emergency relief assistance to the Syrian people, inside and outside Syria. The State of Kuwait would like to thank all countries that participated in the donors conference. Their participation reflected their care and concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria.

We all recognize that the maintenance of peace and security is the key that opens the doors to a dignified life, prosperity and human creativity. This is because factors such as development, in all its economic, social, environmental, political and cultural aspects, cannot

take place when peace and security are lacking or ebbing.

Turning to the Middle East region, Palestine is still facing chronic challenges that have disrupted the vision of a future based on development and regional and international cooperation. The political and security conditions in the region have also been disrupted by the lack of confidence created by Israel's continued policy of building illegal settlements on occupied Palestinian lands, its continued siege of the Gaza Strip and the detention of thousands of Palestinians and their imprisonment in subhuman conditions, in contravention of the most basic rules of international humanitarian law. Such practices reached their peak after Palestine received Observer State status in the Organization.

In this regard, we reiterate that only the international community will be able to find the difficult formula for peace. We value in this respect the ongoing efforts of the United States of America to achieve a breakthrough in the peace process and hope that persistent efforts and pressure on Israel will make it accept the resolutions of international legitimacy.

At the regional level, concerning Iran's nuclear programme, the State of Kuwait supports the ongoing efforts to peacefully resolve this issue in a manner a that will preserve the right of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all countries in the region to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under the supervision and monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also call upon the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate fully with international efforts and work on implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions. We also call on Iran to cooperate with the IAEA and implement its resolutions to find a definitive solution to this crisis, which had cast it shadow on this region for many years, given rise to doubts and created an atmosphere of instability and tension.

This year, the State of Kuwait celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its membership in this enduring Organization. Ever since then, and driven by its belief in the importance of common international action, it has sought to provide highly effective support to many of the agencies, bodies and entities of the United Nations system. This is particularly true in view of the growth and increase in challenges facing the Organization at all levels and putting the international community, represented by the United Nations, to the test, a test of international will and global partnership in facing these challenges.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represented a major shift in the ability of the United Nations to mobilize the global will to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, thus clearly expressing how ambitious the will of the international community really is and the feasibility of this global partnership.

However, major new challenges have emerged that are related either to security disruptions resulting from instability and the violations of human rights that accompany them, or to the steady environmental deterioration that threatens our world, together with other serious and urgent challenges. This requires the international community to take up the inevitable task of rethinking our preparations for a comprehensive and ambitious development plan.

We must complement the efforts aimed at achieving the MDGs by formulating new goals and incorporating them in the post-2015 development plan. This will enable us to take a quantum leap towards a renewed global partnership that will complete the process under way on the scientific bases of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and the principles and outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (resolution 66/288, annex) held in Brazil. It should help our peoples, to whom those goals represent the hope of creating an ideal world and a better life, particularly in the least developed countries or those still recovering from wars and conflicts. In this respect, we refer to the importance of the international community paying careful attention to supporting the foundations of development in order to achieve security and stability in Somalia and Afghanistan.

While the State of Kuwait is considered a developing country, it has been independent since 1961 and given a great deal of attention to providing financial and material assistance to the developing and least developed countries, through many different mechanisms and initiatives. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development is a central Kuwaiti institution firmly committed to implementing its promises and policies on international cooperation and assistance to needy people by on the ground. Since its establishment, and having outgrown its regional Arab scope, the Fund has expanded its activities and development assistance to Asian, African and Central and Latin American countries.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait has provided provisional funding of $500 million to the Republic of Yemen for development projects in the 2012-2014 provisional programme. The contribution seek to support a peaceful transition of power pursuant to the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, which are aimed at ending the crisis in Yemen, re-establishing security and stability there, and rehabilitating the development sectors in order to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the Yemeni people to live in peace and security through the consolidation of democracy and good governance.

The State of Kuwait, through its great interest in promoting and intensifying regional and international multilateral activities by reviewing cooperation and coordination measures in many important and political fields, has hosted many regional and international summits, meetings and conferences. All haved focused on a multiplicity of issues, challenges, hopes and aspirations and supported initiatives aimed at creating better conditions for the peoples of the region and the world.

In order to expand that approach, built on coordination and a spirit of entrepreneurship, in November the State of Kuwait will host the third Arab-African Summit under the theme "Partners in Development and Investment". We hope that this initiative will achieve results that deepen the foundations of Arab-African cooperation and open new horizons in the name of stability, development and cooperation between the people and countries of these two regions. The State of Kuwait will also host the thirty-fourth session of the Supreme Council of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf in December, as well as the twenty-fifth Summit of League of Arab States in March 2014.

In conclusion, I reiterate the commitment of the State of Kuwait to the international multilateral system and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as its belief in the importance that all States fulfil the obligations to which they have committed in international agreements and conferences. That will help in the search for just and equitable solutions to the global threats and challenges confronting us in order to achieve the lofty objective of maintaining international peace and security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement he has just made.

Sheikh Jaber Al Mubarak Al Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Enrico Letta, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have a great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Letta (Italy): With an end to the global crisis finally within reach, it is imperative to make growth and development our first priority today. In the past 10 years, remarkable progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been made. But we have to work harder. We need to empower individuals and communities and increase the capacity of economic and social systems to adapt to the rapid changes of our complex world.

With regard to the post-2015 development agenda, we should address the root causes of the ills afflicting our world rather than limit ourselves to the side effects. Sustainable development, in line with the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, is the best possible antidote. In that conviction, Italy co-facilitated the establishment of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, with universal membership. We are also in favour of reinforcing the Economic and Social Council and of a partial reform of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The promotion of sustainable development goes hand in hand with the spread of democratic principles. We are in favour of the convergence of the sustainable development goals and the MDGs after 2015. But development cannot be simply reduced to economic growth and statistics. We must go beyond gross domestic product and pay adequate attention to the more comprehensive notion of "quality of life".

Special attention should be paid to the role of women's rights and gender equality. Although women

cultivate more than half the food grown in the world, they represent two thirds of the people who live in poverty and suffer from hunger. More female participation in the global economy means more equality and growth.

As the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization (A/68/1) notes, in the past 13 years gains have been made in the fight against poverty, but despite these tangible improvements one in eight persons worldwide still suffers from malnutrition. Food security should be a priority area of action. It combines the need to act locally and globally. It incorporates some of today's most crucial issues: a sustainable relationship between consumption and production, energy efficiency, and more.

Italy is making a specific contribution to the issue of food security through Expo 2015 in Milan. The theme is "Feeding the planet: energy for life". More than 130 countries have so far agreed to participate. Italy will use Expo Milan as an opportunity to exchange best practices on global sustainability in the area of food security and nutrition. We intend to promote new partnerships between the private and public sectors. As I underlined to the heads of the United Nations agencies based in Rome at a recent meeting, Italy feels that the time has come to launch a new global initiative on food. The United Nations participation in Expo 2015 is consequently of great importance. An integrated approach to development also involves a focus on its social dimensions.

The projected rise of the world population highlights one of the most serious problems today. I am referring to global unemployment, particularly among young people. This phenomenon affects every part of the world, including Europe and my country. We want to combine the measures taken at the national and European levels to launch our war against unemployment.

Italy deems it important to focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), a true driver for employment. Such enterprises are well placed to create jobs for young people and contribute to social stability. In Europe, 85 per cent of new jobs in the private sector are created by SMEs. In the employment sector, great attention must also be given to people with disabilities.

Hundreds of millions of people around the world become immigrants in a phenomenon that affects both developed nations and countries of origin. Italy's geographic location makes it a port of entry for thousands of immigrants. At the national level, we respect the fundamental human rights of immigrants and prosecute criminals who engage in human trafficking. At the same time, we have fostered international cooperation with the countries of origin and of transit.

On this crucial subject, I wish to quote Pope Francis, who decided to visit the small island of Lampedusa this summer. He brought a message of support for the thousands of immigrants who arrive there from Africa every year. We should all fight what he called the "globalization of indifference" and feel the suffering of migrants as our own.

Recognizing that more needs to be done at the national and international levels, we look forward to the second summit of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held in New York this October.

Achieving sustainable development requires stability, security and peace. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the Italian Government has underlined the importance of preserving the role of the United Nations as the ultimate guardian of peace. At the same time, we strongly condemn what has taken place in Syria with regard to chemical weapons. We cannot be indifferent to blatant violations of fundamental international rights.

Italy invites all members of the Security Council and other relevant international stakeholders to spare no effort in the search for political solutions. That is why the Italian Government welcomed the Geneva framework for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons. We strongly support the work undertaken in the Security Council aimed at inducing Syria to participate in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We cannot accept the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and in neighbouring countries. Once again, we invite all the parties involved in the conflict to fully respect international humanitarian law. There must be effective protection for humanitarian assistance.

Italy has intensified humanitarian assistance, particularly for refugees. Italy confirms its pledge of $30 million for 2013 and intends to provide even more support to expand the reach of humanitarian assistance. At the Group of 20 Summit held in Saint Petersburg, we announced our intention to implement new humanitarian and emergency initiatives, for an additional $50 million. On Friday, upon my return to Rome, I will enact that measure.

We will continue to keep Somalia high on our agenda. As I confirmed to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud a few days ago in Rome, Italy is willing to help the Somali authorities in their efforts to lay the foundations of an effective and united federal State. Together with Ethiopia, Italy has convened a ministerial meeting of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Partners Forum tomorrow, 26 September, here in New York, to discuss Somalia.

As the top contributor to Libya, Italy is supporting the country in its stabilization and democratic transition, and we remain fully committed to cooperation with the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). Before the end of the year, Italy will host the second international conference on Libya in Rome, which we are preparing together with the Libyan authorities, UNSMIL and other partners.

Italy reiterates its strong commitment to the stabilization of Mali and the Sahel region. At the national level, we are currently funding training for border police in Mali and the Niger. We welcome the holding of the next high-level meeting on the Sahel. The strategy presented by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Romano Prodi, is a good example of increasing efforts and resources.

Italy is the seventh-largest contributor to the general budget of the United Nations. Since 2006, despite financial constraints, we have been the top contributor of United Nations peacekeepers among Western countries. We are demonstrating our commitment to peace and stability through our participation in 10 different United Nations peacekeeping missions worldwide, from the Mediterranean and the Middle East to Africa and Afghanistan.

Italy is engaged in international initiatives related to peace and security, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, which we have already ratified. Other relevant initiatives include the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Italy believes that respect for human rights is fundamental to peaceful coexistence among nations. Our foreign policy will continue to focus on social and humanitarian affairs and the protection of human rights. Wherever human rights are at risk, global peace and security are also at risk.

Italy will continue its efforts to better defend those most vulnerable to violence and discrimination. Our actions and our thoughts must focus on the categories most at risk: women, children, religious and ethnic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, human rights defenders and humanitarian workers.

The recent atrocities in Pakistan once again illustrate the importance of the issue of religious tolerance. The General Assembly should never stop acting to counter religious hatred and fundamentalism.

At the same time, Italy will continue to support the campaign for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

In the second half of 2014, Italy will assume the presidency of the European Union (EU). We want the EU to be more open to the world. That means more European foreign, or rather global, policy. It also means more trade exchanges with the rest of the world. In that connection, we will host the next summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting, in Milan in October 2014.

I am convinced that a well-governed Europe can act as a global player. A good example is the EU enlargement policy, which succeeded in bringing stability to the Balkans in a very short time. It is high time for the EU to rise again to assume a leading role on the world stage. We in Europe must act now for more unity and for more effective governance.

On the theme of adapting to a changing world, allow me to conclude by referring to reform of the Security Council. As a leading member of the Uniting for Consensus group, Italy strongly believes that Security Council reform is absolutely necessary. The adoption of any such reform, however, will require the consensus of a large majority of the membership. We need to update the Security Council to today's world, increasing its accountability, transparency and effectiveness. To bridge the gap between the different models of reform, all Member States should be ready to engage in the next round of negotiations with a higher degree of flexibility and openness to compromise.

We have many challenges ahead. Italy will contribute to addressing those challenges as an active member of the international community within a framework of reinforced global governance. We make that commitment before the General Assembly, and we make that commitment before the international community.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.